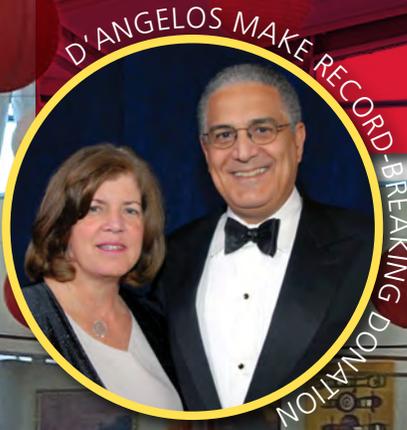


EDUCATION THAT ELEVATES ISSUE

St. John's Magazine

WINTER 2022



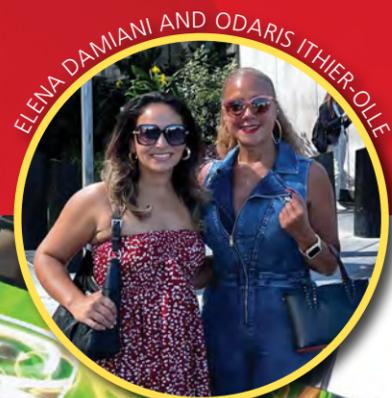
**IN SERVICE TO ONE;
IN SERVICE TO MANY**

**ALUMNA EMPHASIZES
SERVICE WHILE SERVING
AS MISS NEW YORK**

**ALUMNUS ASSISTS IN
WAR-RAVAGED UKRAINE**

A Brand

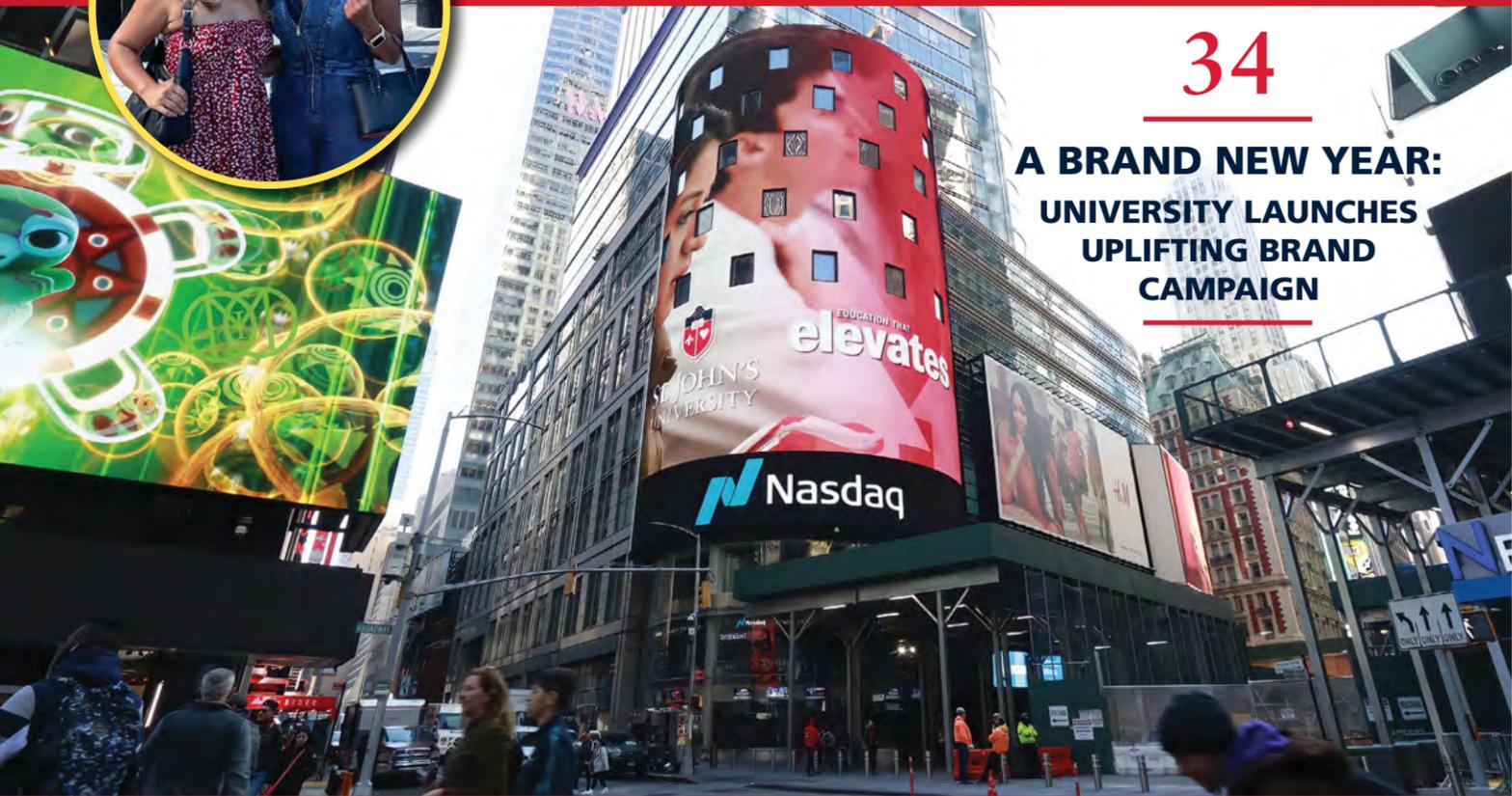
NEW YEAR: University Launches Uplifting Brand Campaign



← TWO LONGTIME COLLEAGUES COLLABORATE ON A UNIQUE BRANDING IDEA THAT WILL BENEFIT ST. JOHN'S FOR YEARS TO COME.

St. John's

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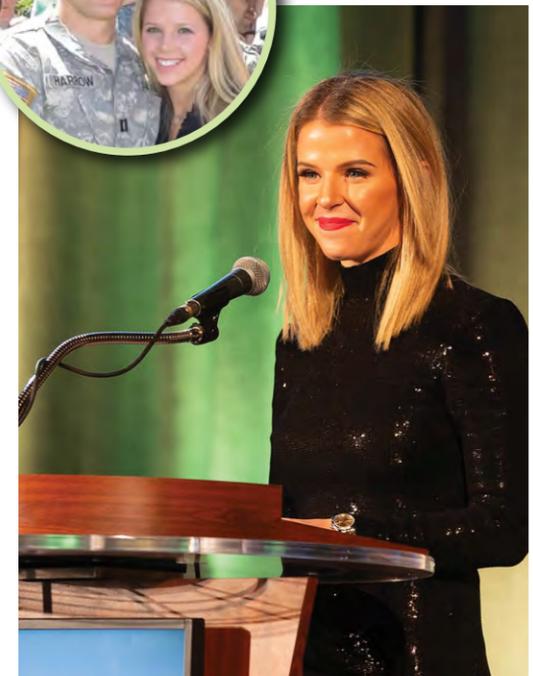
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A Message from Our President

Dear Friend of St. John's:

Before I first began my service as President of St. John's University, I had developed from my time serving as President of Providence College—another BIG EAST school—a basic appreciation and respect for St. John's and its commitment to providing quality Catholic education via the Vincentian mission.

Now almost two years later—and after a period of diligent discovery—I marvel at how St. John's has for so long stayed true to our founding more than a century and a half ago to be a place that elevates and transforms the lives of the students whom we serve. That action of uplifting movement, that upward social mobility, is at the very heart of the story of St. John's. It is the shared story of generations of alumni who support who we are and what we aspire to do. We open students' hearts and minds by providing them with an educational experience and the practical and personal tools to succeed and to serve.

In this issue of *St. John's Magazine*, we focus on stories that demonstrate the simple but profound message of our recent brand campaign, "Education That Elevates." This uplifting message, which you may have already seen in and around the New York media market and beyond, is an important one that I want more people to hear and understand.

I encourage you to read the stories of St. John's students, employees, and alumni who, in their everyday lives, personify and amplify the inexorable ascent that is the journey of St. John's. We elevate students, and our graduates, in turn, elevate society.

The University and our dedicated community work hard to continue this founding mission while facing unprecedented and extraordinary challenges that make the business of higher education in the 21st century a competitive one with both considerable risk and rewards.

To that end, St. John's is making major investments in capital projects and human capital, and implementing a Strategic Plan that will help guide the institution for the next five years. We rely on the support of generous alumni and others to enable and empower us to manifest our transformative mission.

In August, the University announced the planned phasing out of academic operations at our Staten Island, NY, campus. We plan for a process that will last two more academic years, culminating at the end of the Spring 2024 semester. The decision to take this step followed prayerful reflection and an extensive examination of historic and continuing population and student enrollment trends. Our Staten Island campus has experienced steady decreases in enrollment for decades that were the result of many factors exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The campus was a thriving community for many years, but our time there has run its course.

To acknowledge our proud history in the borough and our ongoing commitment to its students, the University has allocated one million dollars toward an endowed scholarship fund to help support future students from Staten Island who enroll at our Queens, NY, campus. While we lament the passing of an era at St. John's, we also celebrate and give gratitude for the good work God has done there.

Please be assured of my continued prayers for you, your families, and our beloved St. John's University!

Sincerely,

Brian J. Shanley, O.P.

Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.

President



ANNUAL
PRESIDENT'S DINNER

Raises More Than \$3M

for Student Scholarships

“ All of you are not giving back,
you're paying forward. ”

— Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.

Held on Thursday, October 27, in the Grand Ballroom of the New York Hilton Midtown, the evening marked the silver anniversary of the University's premier fundraising event. The dinner saw more than \$3.36 million raised that will directly benefit the University's most deserving students. In the last 25 years, this event has raised nearly \$50 million for student scholarships. More than 700 preregistered guests attended the event.

The ballroom, resplendent in St. John's red and white, allowed past and future generations to connect over their common heritage. Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., President of St. John's, told the gathering, "Every time I meet a St. John's student, I thank God that I'm here, and I thank God for you and your generosity." He added, "All of you are not giving back, you're paying forward."

Fr. Shanley noted a truism that those who attend college make more money in life. "As a Catholic institution, that can never be how we sell St. John's." He added that the deeper challenge that everyone faces when they attend college is finding the meaning of their life—and there is more to that meaning than money. "I know you all know that because you gave back, and you're here. You wanted to make an impact in the world, and eventually, give back."

The men and women who best exemplify the University's Vincentian mission were honored at the event with the Spirit of Service Award. These individuals serve as role models as they incorporate these values into their lives in a meaningful way. The dinner affords a unique opportunity for students to interact with the honorees, who serve as the gold standard of St. John's graduates: people who have never forgotten alma mater while rising to the top of their professions.

Many previous Spirit of Service Award winners were also on hand at the anniversary gala, which gave current students the opportunity to meet St. John's alumni who model gratitude and loyalty to alma mater for future generations.

Fr. Shanley posed the question, "What does it mean to lead a meaningful life?" He stressed that the evening's honorees had found a sense of purpose and made a difference in the world in service to other people. "At the heart of tonight is storytelling, and we heard the stories of four St. John's graduates who lived lives of purpose, meaning, value, and impact."



GEODY DAVATZES ACCEPTED AWARD ON BEHALF OF HIS FATHER



ARMANDO PALACIO ACCEPTED AWARD ON BEHALF OF HIS MOTHER

Anita Gomez-Palacio '65Ed, '89PD

Robert E. Evanson '58CBA

Nickolas Davatzes '62C, '64G, '95HON (posthumously)

Rev. Bernard M. Tracey, C.M. '70C

*A*n atmosphere rife with joy, celebration, and gratitude infused the 25th Annual St. John's University President's Dinner, an event that celebrated past milestones as it looked toward a bright future.

This year's President's Dinner honorees were

Nickolas Davatzes '62C, '64G, '95HON (posthumously)
President and Chief Executive Officer, Arts and Entertainment Networks

Robert E. Evanson '58CBA
Retired President, McGraw Hill Education, and former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, (far left)

Anita Gomez-Palacio '65Ed, '89PD, Retired Executive Director of Operations, Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, and Member, St. John's University Board of Trustees

Rev. Bernard M. Tracey, C.M. '70C, Former Executive Vice President for Mission, St. John's University, (center)

Accepting the award on behalf of his father, Geody Davatzes said he firmly believes that Mr. Davatzes would have expressed gratitude that he lived a life that reflected the Vincentian charm—one that enabled him to help those less fortunate in innumerable ways.

Echoing those sentiments, Mr. Evanson said that his time at St. John's helped mold him into the man he is today. "I enjoy being able to provide these scholarships and especially enjoy meeting the students" who benefit from them, he stressed. He added that he looks back fondly on his time at St. John's as he studied and worked full time.



Armando Palacio, accepting the award on behalf of his mother, noted she attended St. John's because of a scholarship granted by her father's union. Reading her remarks, he said, "Fast forward to completing my bachelor's degree in Education at St. John's, a career in education, and two graduate degrees from Columbia Teachers College, and then heading back to St. John's for a further degree. Here I am serving the school I love."

Fr. Tracey, visibly moved, shared, "I value this honor particularly because service is at the heart of being Vincentian and the University."

"At St. John's, students, faculty, alumni, administrators, and staff respond to the call of Vincentian service dealing with people challenged by housing, food, job insecurity, and other needs," Fr. Tracey continued. "They also assess and make recommendations regarding the systems that force people to live on the peripheries and exclude them from achieving their God-given potential. Their service extends beyond New York City and the United States to include many nations throughout the world. They create a 'thin space' to experience God with the people they are serving."

James Shannon '87CBA and his wife, Anissa '89SVC, '91Ed, served as Cochairs for the dinner. Mr. Shannon said of the honorees, "Tonight, we thank our Spirit of Service honorees who have carried the Vincentian spirit in their hearts. They have transformed that spirit into actions that have made a real difference, and they have done so selflessly." Mr. Shannon noted that each honoree now had an endowed scholarship in their name at St. John's.

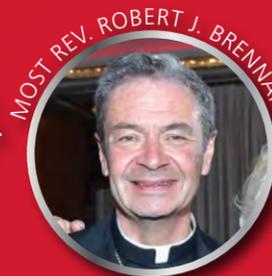


Gloria Pazmino '10CPS, CNN Newsource National Correspondent, served as the evening's Master of Ceremonies. During her remarks, Ms. Pazmino spoke of the many great achievements the University enjoyed as campuses returned to full and vibrant life following the COVID-19 pandemic, not the least of which was the groundbreaking and construction on St. Vincent Health Sciences Center, which will eventually house the new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

This state-of-the art, 70,000-square-foot building will feature simulation spaces, labs, faculty spaces, and classrooms with a capacity for 300 nursing students and 75 physician assistant students per year. "Establishing a nursing program is one step in a major and long-term investment in the health sciences taking place at St. John's," she said.

Ms. Pazmino also noted first-year student enrollment was approaching prepandemic numbers, with nearly 3,000 new students attending the University in the fall semester, as well as record-breaking fundraising numbers that totaled nearly \$29 million in the last year.

Among the dignitaries in attendance were the Very Rev. Stephen M. Grozio, C.M., Provincial Superior of the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission; Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan, '84C Bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn; Most Rev. Christopher Cardone, O.P., Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Honiara, Solomon Islands; and William J. Janetschek '84CBA, '17HON, Chair of the University's Board of Trustees.



Student speaker Celeste Daniel, a Master of Science candidate in the Global Management and Entrepreneurship program, and a native of Trinidad and Tobago, told the gathering she felt immediately at home as soon as she stepped foot on the Queens, NY, campus. "As I sat among future leaders, I felt inspired, motivated, and eager to learn and make new friends," she recalled.

Midway through her St. John's journey Celeste lost her beloved father to gun violence. She reflected that from that moment on, she would dedicate her St. John's journey to him.

"From there onward I truly felt your ongoing support to making my dreams a reality. I was determined to make sure your generous contribution would not only impact my life, but allow me to impact the lives of others, too."

Business major Sofia Ortega said, "What's important for me about tonight is just being in a room with so many diverse and different people who are all connected by the fact they love St. John's. Seeing that passion for our school is really inspiring. It makes me want to stay connected."

Sean George, a Pharmacy major, stressed that he saw value in meeting and listening to so many alumni, administrators, and staff who breathe life into the institution on a daily basis. "These are the people who put together the amazing experience that we have."

Ivan Fernandez, also a Pharmacy major, noted that the President's Dinner gives students a glimpse into the human capital that is the engine that drives St. John's. "We're seeing firsthand the donors and employees who live the Vincentian values that St. John's represents."



NEARLY
\$50M
RAISED FOR STUDENT
SCHOLARSHIPS



“
*I have profound
 gratitude and respect
 for the mission and
 people of St. John’s.*
 ”

Jesuit College President Shaped by *Vincentian* Values

For Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J., Ph.D., M.Div. '86C, '90GE, President of The University of Scranton, the long and circuitous road to his current position first began when he was a student at St. John’s University. Named the 29th President in February 2021, Fr. Marina leads the Catholic and Jesuit liberal arts college in northeastern Pennsylvania that serves almost 5,000 undergraduate, adult, part-time, and graduate students.



25th anniversary celebration of the Higher Education Opportunity Program, L to R: Janet Mangione, Augusta Nugent, Joe Marina, Gerthrine Phillips, Maria Allegretti, Darlene Hughes, Richard Winter, Sr. Margaret M. Fitzpatrick, André McKenzie, Moises Jimenez, Anna Donnelly, and Anne Donini.

“I have a great appreciation for St. John’s University and have fond memories of my time there,” he shared during a recent interview. “My first experience as a student and later as an administrator prepared me for a professional career and a lifetime of service to others.”

Like his personal vocation journey, his education, life experiences, personal mentors, and professional career have all been influenced by manifold experiences and encounters that have prepared him to lead and serve two charisms that transcend both the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians).

Fr. Marina arrived at the Queens, NY, campus in the Spring of 1981 as a first-year college student. After graduating high school and feeling the tug of a vocation to religious life, the Phillipsburg, NJ, native joined the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, who sent their Brothers in formation to study at St. John’s.

He became a novice, professed vows, and graduated from St. John’s in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Science and a minor in Theology and Religious

Studies. After college, he spent time teaching high school students; after a serious vocation discernment, he left the Brothers of the Sacred Heart at age 25. With a one-way ticket to Florida in his pocket, Fr. Marina planned to relocate when a chance encounter with an administrator from St. John’s changed the course of his personal and professional career.

While helping Rev. Joseph P. Foley, C.M., move out of his residence, Fr. Marina was introduced to Sr. Margaret M. Fitzpatrick, S.C., Ed.D. '00HON, President Emerita, St. Thomas Aquinas College, and Congregational Leader, Sisters of Charity Halifax. Now a member of the Board of Trustees at St. John’s, at that time, Sr. Margaret coordinated the University’s Higher Education Opportunity Program.

“
Joe always had leadership potential, and that, combined with his commitment to improving the lives of others, was evident even at that early stage of his career.
 ”

—Sr. Margaret M. Fitzpatrick, S.C.

“Sr. Margaret invited me to come work with her and that began my career in higher education—and it ultimately changed my life,” Fr. Marina said. He worked at St. John’s University from 1987 to 1998, spending nine years at the Queens campus and two more at the Staten Island, NY, campus. He steadily climbed the ranks of academic leadership and became Assistant Dean for Metropolitan College.

“Joe always had leadership potential, and that, combined with his commitment to improving the lives of others, was evident even at that early stage of his career,” recalled Sr. Fitzpatrick.

Maria Allegretti, → a longtime St. John’s employee, echoes that sentiment. Having recently retired as Assistant Dean of St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, she was first hired by Fr. Marina.



“Joe and I first met back in 1989, at which time he headed the newly formed Division of Special and Opportunity Programs on the Staten Island campus. These programs were geared toward assisting academically and economically underprivileged students to prepare them to succeed in college. During that time, I had many opportunities to witness firsthand Joe’s innate ability to connect with people across a variety of settings. He had a way of connecting with students, faculty, and colleagues that was unique. Joe seemed to energize and engage everyone in a manner wherein everyone felt they were a valued member of the team working toward a common goal. I genuinely believe many of our student success stories were a direct result of Joe’s visionary leadership style.”

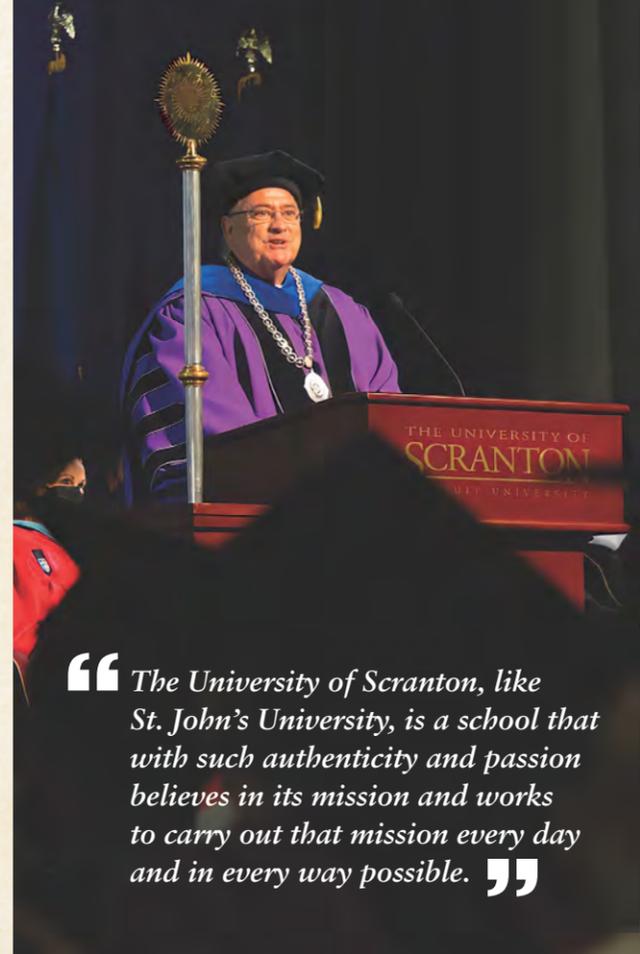
She continued: “On a personal level, while working together, Joe continuously encouraged me to further my education. He helped me to believe I could accomplish much more than I imagined at the time. I honestly believe I would not be where I am today were it not for Joe’s unwavering support, mentorship, and encouragement over the past 33 years. The University of Scranton is certainly blessed to have Joe as their leader, and I look forward to seeing what wonderful accomplishments he achieves as President.”

Stints as Assistant Dean for the College of Science and Mathematics at Montclair State University and as Dean of the School of Continuing Education at Providence College followed his tenure at St. John’s. Along the way, Fr. Marina earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Administration and Supervision from Fordham University, a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from Boston College, and a Master of Science in Secondary Education from St. John’s University. His research interests include leadership and organizational change, and, in the area of theology, scripture and the question of nonbelief.

In 2004, at 42 years old—and with years of professional experience in higher education administration—Fr. Marina joined the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic religious order founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola with a long tradition of forming teachers and scholars. Jesuit formation takes 10 to 12 years, so it was unusual to have a novice of that age.

“It was the time in my life for me to make a vocation decision and I came to know the Jesuits during my doctoral studies at Fordham, a Jesuit-led university in Bronx, NY. “With the Jesuits, I felt like I was coming home,” he said.

Fr. Marina was ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 2012, by the late Cardinal Edward M. Egan, the Archbishop Emeritus of New York, at the Fordham University Church.

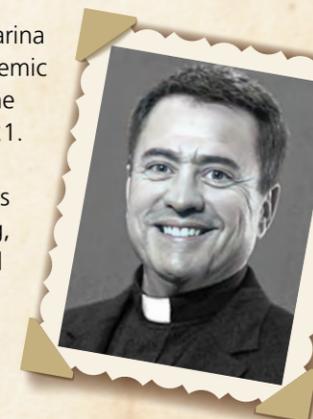


“The University of Scranton, like St. John’s University, is a school that with such authenticity and passion believes in its mission and works to carry out that mission every day and in every way possible.”

“Joe’s ascendancy in higher education comes as no surprise as his commitment to the transformational power of a values-based education was nurtured here at St. John’s and nurtured through administrative roles he held in our Division of Special and Opportunity Programs,” stated André McKenzie, Ed.D., Vice Provost.

“In looking back on Joe’s time here at St. John’s, the care and concern he demonstrated toward others, coupled with his strong organizational abilities and interpersonal skills, paved the way for his progression up the ranks of College and University leadership,” Dr. McKenzie said. “Joe continues to be a consensus building, service-driven leader, both strong in his faith and in his commitment to educational opportunity.”

Prior to becoming Scranton’s president, Fr. Marina served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Education at Le Moyne College from 2016 through the Spring of 2021. His responsibilities included overseeing the Jesuit college’s three academic schools, honors program, library, campus life, student housing, conduct and Title IX compliance, diversity and inclusion programming, global education, student success and support services, and disability services, among other areas.



From December 2020 to February 2021, Fr. Marina briefly served as Acting President at Le Moyne College. Before his tenure as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, he held positions at Le Moyne as Associate Provost, Interim Chair of the education department, and Special Assistant to the President.

Earlier in his priestly ministry, he served as Pastor of the Church of St. Francis Xavier and as Associate Pastor of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, both of which are in New York City. He cites his time in parish work as critical to shaping his heart and mind and how he interacts with those he serves.

As the President of the University of Scranton, Fr. Marina identifies ongoing strategic priorities. “Academic excellence, care for the human person, and social justice are all vital issues for Catholic higher education today,” he said. “Affordability and access are critical issues for potential students in most Catholic colleges and universities today.”

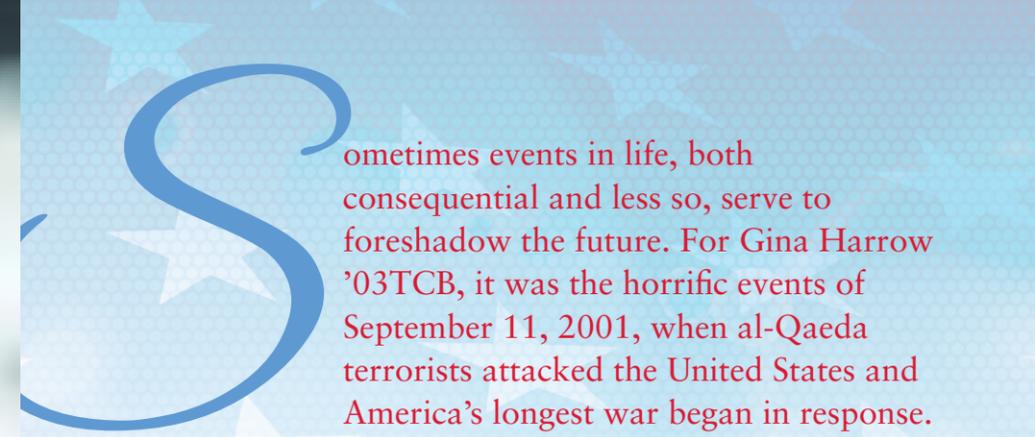
“Being a college President is a lot of work, but it is good and meaningful work,” he added. “I imagine St. Ignatius walking around the Scranton campus and smiling about what is happening here—and that makes me smile. The University of Scranton, like St. John’s University, is a school that with such authenticity and passion believes in its mission and works to carry out that mission every day and in every way possible.”

Recalling the formative time he spent at the large, urban, Vincentian-run University, Fr. Marina emphatically declared, “I have profound gratitude and respect for the mission and people of St. John’s. They will always be in my heart and prayers.”

Gina Harrow

In Service to One; In Service to Many

A STORY OF HOW GLOBAL EVENTS WOULD HIT GINA'S HOMETOWN, IMPACT HER MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, AND ULTIMATELY SERVE TO STRENGTHEN HER RESOLVE TO SERVE OTHERS IN NEED.



Sometimes events in life, both consequential and less so, serve to foreshadow the future. For Gina Harrow '03TCB, it was the horrific events of September 11, 2001, when al-Qaeda terrorists attacked the United States and America's longest war began in response.

Looking back two decades later, it is one of the darkest days in US history and the singular day that she cites to begin her story—a story of how global events would hit her hometown, impact her marriage and family, and ultimately serve to strengthen her resolve to serve others in need.

Sitting in her Florida home with the family dog curled up in her lap, Gina, in a plain white T-shirt and wearing her blonde hair casually pulled back, looks very much the part of the self-professed busy soccer mom that she is, balancing work, family life, and an inner determination to “get things done.” Momentarily pausing, she begins to reflect on the past and future, describing a life lived in service to her family and her ever-growing extended military family.

Today, Gina serves as Executive Director of the Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc., a nonprofit veteran service organization that provides housing, transportation, and caregiver and family support to severely wounded, ill, and injured post-9/11 service members from every branch of the United States military following unexpected medical crises. More than a job, her vocation to serve military families is born of the personal experience that she and her husband, US Army Capt. Ben Harrow (Ret.), endured after Ben, while leading a team of Green Berets on an antiterrorism mission, stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED) and was seriously wounded.



Recalling how on September 11 she watched history unfold as an undergraduate student studying finance at The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, Gina shares, “I was in class at the Queens, NY, campus, and our professor dismissed us for the day. It was a chaotic time. As a New Yorker, it hit home and it hit hard.”

Gina, a native of Great Neck, NY, was studying at St. John's after transferring from the University of Connecticut. By the time she got to St. John's, she was helping to finance her education by working full time and carrying a robust course load; there was not much time for extracurricular activities.

“I was always working. I was a commuter student, studying and working,” she explained. “I wanted to get my degree and get out into the world, and St. John's enabled me to do that.”

Upon graduation in 2003, Gina continued to work full time in finance and accounting, and eventually joined American Express, climbing the corporate ranks and developing her professional career. While at American Express, she married her childhood sweetheart. Gina and Ben attended rival high schools in Great Neck and even dated as teens before getting reacquainted after college.

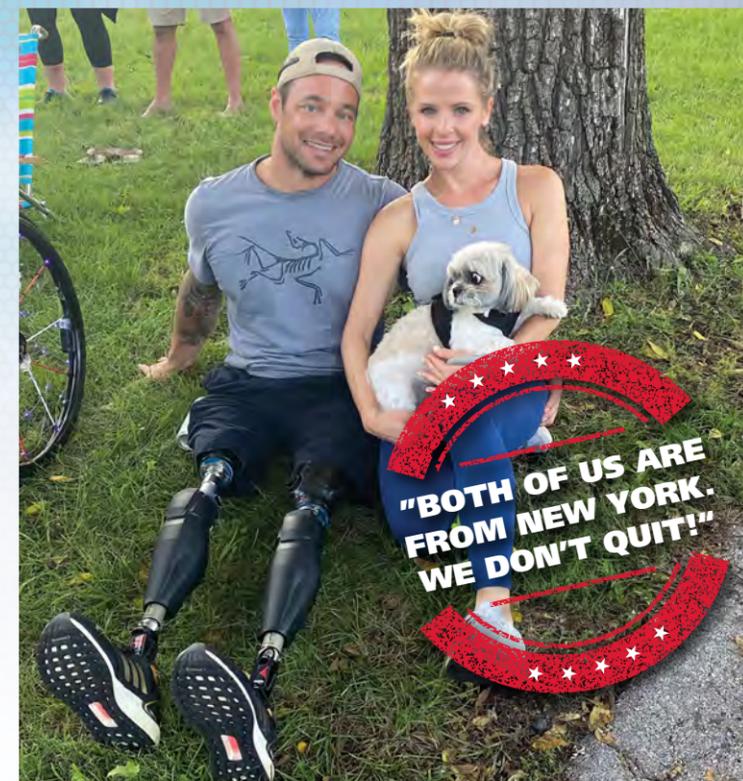
Ben graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2005. At West Point, he was a student-athlete, distinguishing himself on the lacrosse team as a short stick midfielder while earning the Unsung Hero award his senior year. Ben had already completed one deployment to Iraq by the time he and Gina were married in 2008.

At first, life as a military spouse did not seem to interrupt Gina's career path. She transferred to an American Express office in Greensboro, NC, and she drove 180 round-trip miles daily from Fort Bragg.

"Being a commuter at St. John's prepared me for that," she said.

A young professional, she enjoyed learning the back end of business and operations and excelled at learning new things and implementing corporate procedures.

For the newlyweds, life revolved around work and Ben's military career. Ben left for his second military deployment overseas, and the very next day the young couple learned they were expecting their first child. He was able to get home to be present for the birth of their son, Peyton.



With a husband spending extended periods of time fighting in an overseas war, Gina embraced her career and being a new mom. She was able to communicate with her husband somewhat regularly and counted the days and prayed for his safe return home.

In another example of prescient foreshadowing, Gina shares, "At the time, I wasn't a very involved military wife. I worked and took care of our son; I did not get involved in programs for service members or their families. I relied on my own big Italian family, especially my ever-supportive parents." →

Life dramatically changed when, in mid-May 2012, Gina received the phone call that every military spouse fears. Five months into his third deployment, Ben, while working a routine mission with Afghan security, walked into a doorway, took a step, and felt the brunt of the biggest blow he had ever experienced. Ben had stepped on a 10-pound pressure-plate IED and was blown several feet in the air, maiming both of his legs above the knee, two fingers, and a portion of his right forearm in the blast.



"Sorry, Gina," were the words that went through Ben's mind immediately following the devastating explosion.

Life would never be the same for the young couple, but as a testament to the power of their mutual love and shared determination—and with the help of an extended family—they survived.

Ben was transferred to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, and Gina spent the next six months in the hospital as doctors fought to save his life. She slept by his side in a chair and would keep track of doctors, nurses, and everyone that passed through his door. She immediately became a patient advocate, using her business acumen and unwavering devotion to her family.

Ben fought four bacterial and two fungal infections, which kept infecting healthy tissue. He summoned every ounce of mental and physical strength necessary to defy medical expectations and be released from the hospital two months earlier than projected.

“EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY. THE ROAD IS NOT ALWAYS EASY. NEVER GIVING UP, AND STAYING FOCUSED ON GOALS, IS HOW YOU GET THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES. ABSORB THE LIFE LESSONS THAT ST. JOHN'S OFFERS AND ALWAYS BE READY TO SERVE.”

Ben underwent experimental treatment to extend the bone in his femur to hold a prosthetic in place. He was able to make enough of a recovery to return home after more than 75 surgeries.

Family, faith, and friends created a much-needed support system for Gina and Ben as they navigated new challenges.

"I have a big family and great friends," she said. "We were overwhelmed by love and support."

In a moment, the life they had was taken away from them, but they gradually worked to adjust and rebuild, to survive, and to slowly thrive.

Organizations like the Tunnel to Towers Foundation helped with a home designed to address their unique needs so they could reclaim their day-to-day independence.

"Both of us are New Yorkers. We don't quit!" Gina emphatically declared.

When talking to Gina, she uses the term "we" exclusively. Every reference to her family, important decisions, and shared experiences are seen through the mutual lens of Ben—her teammate, soulmate, and husband.



"Military families and caregivers need support, and I want to help the same people whom I watched struggle," she said. "I work to be an advocate and empower our recipients to work through the difficult moments of their journey and find comfort in the community."



Yellow Ribbon's mission is to help fill in the gaps and help families stay together, according to Gina. "A solid family foundation means they can build new lives, find independence, and create a new normal," she said. "Yellow Ribbon is that extra helping hand."

It is a role that she was made for, according to Vito A. Pampalona, Chairman of the Board of the Yellow Ribbon Fund.

"Gina's work ethic and dedication to this very special cause are unwavering. She has taken the Yellow Ribbon Fund to a new level in the nonprofit world and her efforts have changed and also saved lives. And besides accomplishing all of this, she also finds the time to be a great mother and dedicated wife to her severely wounded husband. I am proud to know and work with Gina as she is an inspiration to all."

Today, the Harrow family is busy. Ben works for a company that handles private aviation aircraft management and coaches soccer.

"Our lives revolve around our children," Gina explained. "Peyton and his younger sister, Marchesa, keep us going—and going at full speed."

Reflecting on the two decades of living since graduating from St. John's, Gina comes back to the ideals of family. "It's all about family. St. John's is a family. The military is a family. We are all a family."

When asked to give advice to current students, Gina shares: "Embrace uncertainty. The road is not always easy. Never giving up, and staying focused on goals, is how you get through life's challenges. Absorb the life lessons that St. John's offers and always be ready to serve." 🗝️



It was not always easy. Gina describes the pain she witnessed as military families often struggled to navigate a complicated and at times bureaucratic system. Marriages are tested and the pain lingers even as physical wounds heal. The needs of military families are complex and ongoing, and supportive services are essential. Critical needs such as transportation to a medical appointment or securing childcare and housing are often a protracted struggle.

Once Ben was settled at home, Gina gradually wanted to return to work and an opportunity with the Yellow Ribbon Fund became available.

Founded in 2005, the Yellow Ribbon Fund works to keep families together during the recovery process for wounded, ill, and injured service members. They do this by providing housing and transportation during recovery and by giving caregiver support when and where it is needed.

Gina is responsible for the nonprofit's programming and operations, having previously served as the Deputy Executive Director. Before that, she served as Keystone Program Director, creating the program's infrastructure of transitional services and training, such as health and wellness education and opportunities, family retreats, and peer-to-peer support, provided to caregivers in five regional locations.

It was the overwhelming support she received that turned her energy outward when she witnessed the gauntlet of issues that military families often face.

THE McCALLEN SOCIETY

Spotlight:

Josephine Fontana '66CBA



For Josephine Fontana '66CBA, blazing a path where few, if any, women dared to tread has been one of the defining characteristics of her remarkable life.

Never one to be satisfied with merely following the crowd, Josephine was in a small group of women in the accounting program on St. John's University's Schermerhorn Street campus in downtown Brooklyn, NY, and one of only two in her class to graduate with a degree in Public Accounting. Although at the time the accounting field was populated almost exclusively by men, that reality never fazed this feisty young woman who had arrived from Italy only a few years earlier.

Unfortunately, it was the mid-1960s, and her gender was a formidable obstacle to overcome. As did most seniors, Josephine took advantage of the career services offered by the University and participated in a number of on-campus interviews, one of which was with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

"I wanted to apply as a Special Agent with the Criminal Investigation Division, but was told that the position was not open to women," she explained. "Instead, I was offered a position as a Revenue Agent, a civil position which required auditing individuals, partnerships, and corporate tax returns. I accepted, became the first female Revenue Agent hired by the Manhattan District of the IRS—and entered what would become a wonderful career in law enforcement."

In order to encourage other women to join the federal government, the Public Affairs office assigned her to be a contestant on the television shows *To Tell the Truth* and *What's My Line?* Both shows featured contestants with unusual professions attempting to stump celebrity panelists and were very popular during that time period.

Josephine acknowledges that were it not for St. John's, her life would have gone in a very different direction. She enjoyed her student days on Schermerhorn Street, and is grateful that the University provided her with an opportunity to embark on what became a meaningful and satisfying career.

Her membership in The McCallen Society allows her to make a difference for the students who will follow in her footsteps, offering them the resources to turn their own dreams into reality—just as she did many years ago. "St. John's made such a difference for me, and I'm happy to do what I can for the students of tomorrow," she said. "I believe in giving back, and having the University in my estate plans is a good way for me to help make that happen. After all, changing lives is what St. John's has always been about." 🗝️

“
I became the first female
Revenue Agent hired
by the Manhattan
District of the IRS—
and entered what
would become a
wonderful career in
law enforcement.”

For more information,
contact Susan M. Damiani
'87CBA, Director of Gift
Planning, at 718-990-7562
or damianis@stjohns.edu.



Alumna Emphasizes *Service* while Serving as Miss *New York*



A native of Seattle, WA, Taryn Delanie Smith '21CCPS, '21MS felt compelled to move to Queens, NY, and attend St. John's University. It's a journey that has culminated in her being crowned Miss New York this past May.

As Miss New York, Taryn is required to advocate on a social impact initiative of her choice; she welcomed the opportunity to further advance efforts she began in high school to assist the homeless. While a student at St. John's, Taryn created Supporting Our Shelters (SOS), which educates the community about the importance of shelters. So far she has raised thousands of dollars on behalf of the homeless.

She will compete in the Miss America Scholarship Competition in December. "It all ties together really beautifully," she explained. "Service is a key point of participating in Miss America. You have to have a plan for how you're going to serve in a really large way."

Taryn only applied to St. John's. A transfer student, she told her parents she was going if accepted—despite never having visited New York. "I felt like I was called to go to St. John's because of the strong service aspect. I always knew that I was meant to live in New York," she stressed.

While at St. John's, Taryn hosted the show *SJWho* through WRED-TV, where she highlighted servant leaders within the St. John's community. "That really introduced me to how much I wanted to start using the media and communication to further a positive service narrative throughout the world."



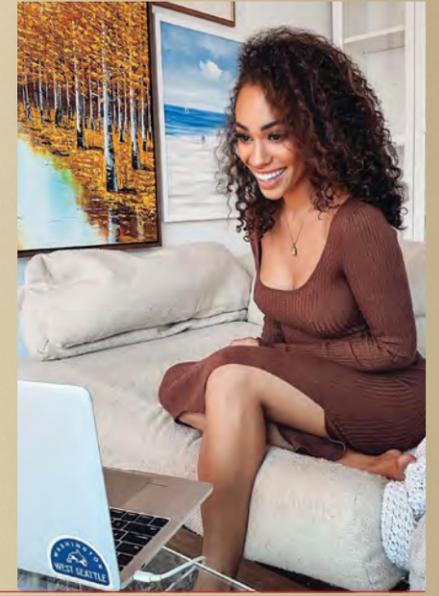
A staunch advocate for the homeless and the importance of homeless shelters, Taryn immediately identified with the Vincentian mission of St. John's. "I felt like I was called to go to St. John's because of the strong service aspect."

Basilio G. Monteiro, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mass Communication, in The Lesley H. and William L. Collins College of Professional Studies, whom Taryn, a Communication Studies major, noted as a particularly positive influence, recommended she apply to the accelerated, five-year master's program in International Communication. "He's been a valued advocate and help to me."

“*My ultimate goal in life is to help other people feel that they have the power within them to do great things just as they are. If I can do that, I will feel like I've been successful.*”

"One of the most important things about going to St. John's was how much I was able to expand on and focus on service," Taryn stressed. "My service experience centered on poverty, and Americans experiencing poverty. I was able to gear myself toward human rights and pair myself with my first network of shelters while at St. John's."

As a young child, Taryn experienced housing insecurity; were it not for a family friend, her family would have found themselves homeless. She believes that if everyone in the country had the opportunity to serve a meal at a shelter, "they would recognize themselves in the people they serve."



“They would see their mom, their dad,” she continued. “We’re all human, and I think people forget that it could be you or a family member. I try to treat people with the same love and affection I would want people to treat my family with. Community to me is family. Serving has reminded me that we are all connected.”

Taryn emphasized that while at St. John’s she learned to help herself. “The reason I had the experience I did was that I came as a transfer student and had experienced life already. If you want something, no one is coming to give it to you. You have to be a self-starter and knock on every door until someone opens. I heard ‘no’ so many more times than I heard ‘yes.’ I really wanted these things, and at St. John’s I learned how to get them. You have to let go of your pride and be prepared to fail. If you’re prepared to fail, you will do well.”

She added, “The professors really want you to succeed. I worked full time, and they were flexible and understanding. They didn’t give me passes or an easy out. They just gave me the tools. I would not be who I am today without St. John’s.”



“One of the most important things about going to St. John’s was how much I was able to expand on and focus on service.”

During her time studying abroad at the University’s Paris, France, location, Taryn interned at France-Amériques, an initiative that promotes the bonds of friendship between France and the US. “Working in diplomacy showed me how I really sought to live a public life campaigning for others,” she recalled. “St. John’s literally changed the trajectory of my entire life. An education can change the way you think and the way you show up in the world.”

Growing up, Taryn said she never envisioned participating in a pageant, but during a high school talent show a teacher suggested she compete one day for Miss America. She competed for Miss Seattle, and at the time she was trying to involve herself in the discussion of homelessness. After winning the competition, she found it easier to gain access to higher-level service and advocacy opportunities. “After that I caught the bug.”

Taryn competed in the Miss New York Competition and was first runner up. Then she aged out of the competition. The rules were subsequently changed and the age limit increased. She competed one more time—and won in May. “If you’re not seeking pageantry as a vehicle to elevate yourself as a career woman, then you’re going to be disappointed.”

“I see it as a platform to amplify the voices of others—and it has really worked.”

Taryn has met with representatives in Congress, as well as shelter directors, acting as a conduit between these constituencies to improve communication and hopefully make progress.

Initially, Taryn intended to enter the arena of diplomacy, but since being crowned Miss New York she has seen the power of media to make citizen diplomats out of regular people. “If I could have my own show or be a correspondent for a show like *Good Morning America*, it would be a dream come true.”

She added, “My ultimate goal in life is to help other people feel that they have the power within them to do great things just as they are. If I can do that, I will feel like I’ve been successful.”



Alumni

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THANKS FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!

Rita Torsney-Sullivan '20MBA
Associate Director of Alumni Engagement and Volunteer Programs

LGBTQ+ Center Welcomes University Community as it Opens Door to New Home



Faculty, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. "What happens though, is students graduate, and administrators and faculty move on, and then you have to start all over again. This center provides continuity."

Since the center was first formed, it has been instrumental in a wide range of initiatives at St. John's, including the addition of Gender-Affirming Housing, the mapping of All-Gender Bathrooms on campus, and the creation of University LGBTQ+ Resources.

"The reaction from everyone has been overwhelmingly positive," said Candice D. Roberts, Ph.D., Founding Codirector of the LGBTQ+ Center and Associate Professor, Division of Mass Communication. "In the last year, we have received so many congratulatory emails from faculty, staff, and alumni, and surprise and excitement from our students."

THIS CENTER PROVIDES CONTINUITY.
—Shanté Paradigm Smalls, Ph.D.



ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

ONE OF OUR GOALS THIS YEAR IS VISIBILITY.
—Candice D. Roberts, Ph.D.



After a year without an official home, the center is now nestled on the second floor of St. John Hall in room 216. First created in 2021, the LGBTQ+ Center is a resource and research hub for organizing, coordinating, and innovating LGBTQ+ issues, and serves as an open and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and employees.

"There have been so many efforts going on for decades to increase the safety, inclusion, and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals on campus," explained Shanté Paradigm Smalls, Ph.D., Founding Codirector of the LGBTQ+ Center; Associate Professor, Black Studies; and Affiliate

"My gender journey has been a bit confusing, so having the center is a wonderful resource for me," said Valerie Fulmer, a second-year graduate student in Chinese Studies. "It's amazing to have a place to go where I don't have to worry if someone is going to be nice to me and just acknowledge me for who I am."

Last year, the center hosted a wide range of events, including a book talk with researcher Dennis Tyler, Ph.D., a screening of documentarian Vivian Kleiman's film on queer comics, and the Interdisciplinary LGBTQ+ Research Jam, a forum for members of the St. John's University community to collaborate around LGBTQ+ research.

"One of our goals this year is visibility," Dr. Roberts explained. "We want to highlight and promote the center and all the partners of the center so that everybody on campus knows who we are, where we are, and what we have to offer. We want the center's legacy to position St. John's as being at the forefront of Vincentian social action through impactful research and service."

"One of the core values of our University is respect, which we express as 'a courteous regard for all people whose diversity is embraced.' The opening of this center reflects our concrete commitment to this value. This is an important moment for our community," said Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., President of St. John's.

For Alex Conger-Bonet '22CCPS, a first-year graduate student from Detroit, MI, the center is a welcome addition to the University. "There's been a little bit of a shift, not just here, but around the whole country, where people are trying to figure it out to be themselves," Alex noted. "I think the University is spot-on in opening this center, and I'm glad to see that people are excited about it."



"Congratulations to Drs. Smalls and Roberts on a successful launch of the LGBTQ+ Center," said Kathryn T. Hutchinson, Ph.D., Vice President for the Division of Student Affairs. "The space is a warm and inviting place to support one another, share ideas, and be in community together. The center is an important resource for St. John's that enhances belongingness, equity, and inclusion."

The St. John's University community joined together recently to celebrate the opening of St. John's LGBTQ+ Center inside St. John Hall on the Queens, NY, campus.



St. John's holds a special place in our hearts. It is a place that turns opportunity into outcomes for hard-working students who want to make a difference in the world.



GENEROUS ALUMNI AND LONGTIME BENEFACTORS TO ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, MARGARET AND PETER D'ANGELO HAVE PLEDGED A \$20 MILLION DONATION—THE LARGEST SINGLE GIFT IN THE 152-YEAR HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Margaret and Peter **D'Angelo**

Make Record-Breaking Donation to Support the St. Vincent Health Sciences Center



ST. VINCENT HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER



D'ANGELO CENTER "DAC"

"The Vincentian mission of service and education that burns bright at St. John's is one that we need more of today," remarked Mrs. D'Angelo, who chairs the Mission and Student Success Committee of the St. John's Board of Trustees.

Together, the D'Angelos have already left an indelible mark on St. John's. The couple has endowed a scholarship for mathematics majors seeking to pursue a career in education, and established the Peter P. and Margaret A. D'Angelo Chair in the Humanities within St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—the University's oldest division. The D'Angelo Chair and lecture draw high-profile, multi-, and cross-disciplinary visiting professors to the College for a semester of teaching and scholarly exchange.

Board of Trustees member Margaret La Rosa D'Angelo '70Ed, '22HON, and her husband, Board of Trustees Chair Emeritus Peter P. D'Angelo '78MBA, '06HON, generous alumni and longtime benefactors to St. John's University, have pledged a \$20 million donation—the largest single gift in the 152-year history of St. John's University—to support the construction of the new St. Vincent Health Sciences Center at the Queens, NY, campus. Their support directs \$15 million toward the construction of the center and five million dollars to the University's most critical needs.

The new 70,000-square-foot St. Vincent Health Sciences Center, presently under construction and scheduled to open in the Fall of 2024, will become the permanent home of St. John's Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing program. The new nursing program is currently housed in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences—the largest provider of health-care personnel in Queens County and one of the major health-care educators in the New York City region.

"The center's design and flexible room layouts will promote inter-professional education among existing academic programs and will enable students to learn together and work as a team, like the real-world situation found in any clinical setting," remarked Simon G. Møller, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University Distinguished Professor, and Provost Endowed Chair. "The center's state-of-the-art simulation facilities will allow students to learn in a safe, realistic, clinical environment before they begin clinical rotation assignments at off-campus sites. The generous support of Peg and Peter D'Angelo will help make this happen."

The center, estimated to cost \$106 million, is partially funded by a \$1.25 million federal appropriation from the US Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration secured by Representative Gregory W. Meeks in the US House of Representatives and Senator Charles E. Schumer in the US Senate. In addition, St. John's secured a five-million-dollar New York State Higher Education Capital Matching Grant and a \$700,000 Empire State Development grant from Round XI of the Regional Economic Development Council initiative.

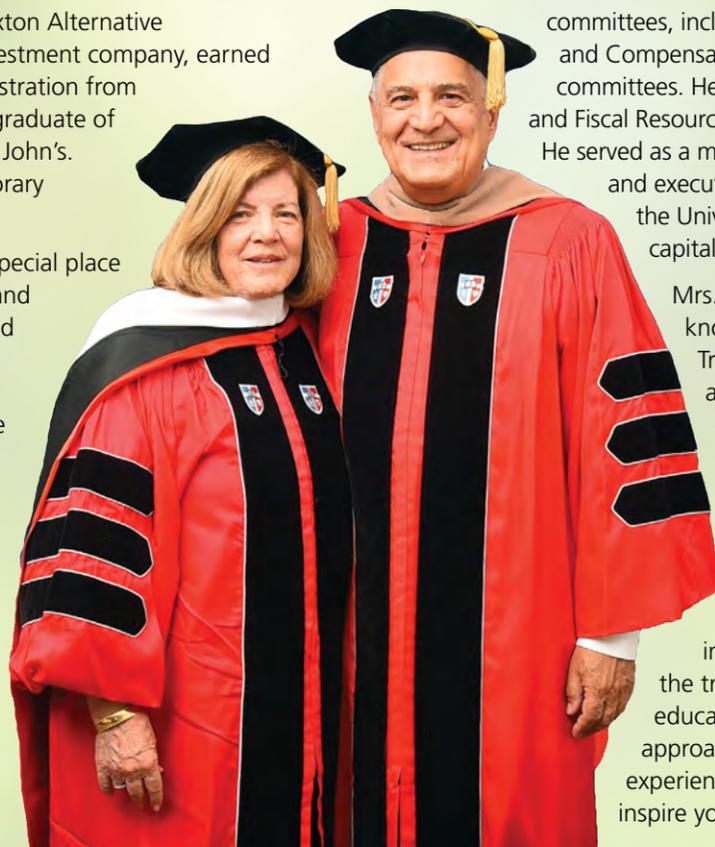
At the suggestion of the D'Angelos, and with the approval of the St. John's Board of Trustees, the center was renamed earlier this year to honor St. Vincent de Paul, the 17th-century Catholic priest who combined faith, intellect, and considerable business acumen to revolutionize methods of caring for and educating those in need. Respected by the powerful and loved by the poor, St. Vincent de Paul bridged social classes through his works of charity and his advocacy for the disenfranchised. St. John's was founded and is sponsored by the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians).

Opened in 2009, the strikingly beautiful D'Angelo Center on the University's Queens campus stands as a visible reminder of their generosity and exceptional devotion to alma mater. Modeled after the Great Hall on Ellis Island that welcomed immigrants to the United States, the center—commonly referred to by students as "the DAC"—is a five-story, 127,000-square-foot, multipurpose academic facility that is a popular hub of student life and activity on campus.

Mr. D'Angelo, President of Caxton Alternative Management, LP, a private investment company, earned his master's in business administration from St. John's. Mrs. D'Angelo is a graduate of The School of Education at St. John's. Both have been awarded honorary degrees from the University.

"St. John's University holds a special place in our hearts," expressed Mr. and Mrs. D'Angelo. "We are excited about its direction, investment in the health sciences, and unwavering commitment to be a place that turns opportunity into outcomes for hard-working students who want to make a difference in the world."

Mr. D'Angelo was first elected as a Trustee of St. John's in 2003; he was elected Chair in 2011 and voted Chair Emeritus in 2016. During his service as a Trustee, he gave time and talent to several



committees, including the Executive, Audit and Compensation, and Educational Quality committees. He also chaired the Investment and Fiscal Resource Management Committees. He served as a member of both the national and executive campaign committees for the University's "Fulfilling the Dream" capital campaign.

Mrs. D'Angelo, affectionately known as "Peg," is a current Trustee of the University and an avid supporter of education, access, and opportunity for all. She is a past Chair of the Board of Catholic Charities of Long Island. She has served as a Trustee of the Church of St. Anne in Garden City, NY, and Sacred Heart Academy in Hempstead, NY. A believer in the transformative power of Catholic education, she takes a proactive approach to amplifying academic experiences that engage, enlighten, and inspire young people.



"Few individuals have made a greater impact on St. John's University than Peg and Peter, who stand as models of all that St. John's seeks to achieve," stated Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., President. "The D'Angelos not only give their time and talent to St. John's, but have been sage trustees and extraordinarily generous benefactors as well. Whether in brick and mortar or in the foundational Vincentian values they emulate, they demonstrate exceptional devotion to alma mater and a real spirit of supportive service to generations of students at St. John's. I am grateful to the D'Angelos for their extraordinary philanthropy and for all that they do for St. John's." 🙏

Alumnus Assists in Relief Efforts in War-Ravaged Ukraine

As he watched the images from besieged Ukraine in March, one thought entered the mind of Tymon Meehan '05CPS, '07MPS:

“What must be done?”

That Vincentian question prompted Tymon to approach his wife Milena about the possibility of joining relief efforts in Poland for Ukrainians displaced by Russia’s invasion, which began on February 24, 2022, as part of an escalation of a war that started eight years earlier.

Initially wary, Milena, born in Lodz, Poland, ultimately agreed, and the pair traveled to Elk, Poland, a few hours from the border with Ukraine. There, they and two colleagues helped refugees secure bedding, food, and even medical care for those displaced by the conflict.

“As the product of a Catholic University, and as someone whose whole education was founded on the Catholic value of helping others, when I saw what was going on I wanted to do something,” Tymon recalled. “Plus, my wife still has family in that part of the world. Once the invasion started, we did not know how far it would extend. Everything was so unknown then.”

Inspired to help after a conversation with members of the Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict in Huntington, NY, who operate two children’s homes in Ukraine, Tymon and Milena arrived in Poland two weeks after the invasion began. Tymon, 38, is a lieutenant and emergency medical technician in the New York Police Department (NYPD); Milena, 46, is a retired NYPD sergeant.

“As the product of a Catholic University, and as someone whose whole education was founded on the Catholic value of helping others, when I saw what was going on I wanted to do something.”

—Tymon Meehan



Tymon is also the son of Kathleen “Kathy” Meehan '75Ed, '79GEd, the University’s Senior Deputy Athletic Director, and the product of a Polish and Irish family. As an alumna and long-serving employee, Kathy instilled Vincentian values in her own family. For this and more she was presented with the Vincentian Mission Award in 1995 for her service work among the physically and socially disadvantaged.

“I had heard that the Benedictine sisters were taking in refugees and they needed physical help on the ground,” Tymon said. “I said, ‘sign me up.’ Once my wife processed it, she became very excited about it.”

Both Meehans worked in the NYPD’s medical unit and speak fluent Polish. They joined two other NYPD colleagues, one who is fluent in Russian and another who is a former Army combat medic, in shuttling refugees from the border to Elk, where the Missionary Sisters of St. Benedict have a convent.



The Meehans and their colleagues were not permitted to cross the border into Ukraine. Despite fluencies in several related languages, no one in the group spoke Ukrainian. There was, however, what Tymon called a “mutual intelligibility” from the number of ethnic Poles living in Ukraine at the time of the invasion.

The sheer volume of evacuees was eye-opening, Milena said.

“There were a lot of refugees being bused to the border,” Milena recalled. “At one point there were busloads of people staying wherever we could put a mattress. We made sandwiches for them and sorted the donated food as it was shipped across the border.”



"We were basically living among them," Tymon added. "Medically, we were able to take their vital signs, and if they had allergic reactions to food, we helped out."

The Meehans and their colleagues stayed several weeks in Poland. Whatever anxiety Kathy Meehan felt was offset by her son and daughter-in-law's obvious commitment to the relief effort.

"Was I nervous for them? Sure," Kathy admitted. "But they obviously were moved by everything that was going on and wanted to help. God put them in a place where they could do good."



Using apps on their phones, Tymon and Milena were able to communicate with their family back in the United States. During one call, Kathy heard they would be unable to cross the border into Ukraine. "I wasn't unhappy about that," she said half-jokingly.

Tymon said his desire to assist the refugees came from an understanding of Christian service learned from his parents that was reinforced during his years at St. John's. Kathy maintained it came within Tymon and Milena themselves.

"As a parent, you always hope that what you do by example is stronger even than anything you just say to your children," Kathy said. "But this was their personal journey. They wanted to do something."

Tymon and Milena now live in Manhasset, NY, thousands of miles from the shelling in Ukraine, but still close enough to be impacted by it emotionally.

Comfortably back at home, the Meehans said they would consider another refugee visit. That is more of a challenge now, however, as months of shelling, coupled with fierce Ukrainian resistance, has leveled much of the nation's infrastructure and made exiting the country more difficult for the refugees.

However, that has not dimmed their eagerness to serve those impacted by the war.

"I've been a police officer a long time and I've seen a lot of stuff, but then you see these people who have lost everything and have no more physical possessions," Tymon reflected. "It is on a different scale, and they smile because someone gives them a sandwich. It reinforces what ought to be most important." 🍷



“ God put them in a place where they could do good. **”**



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* Source: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, *Journal of College and Character (JCC) Connexions*, Vol. 6, No. 3, August 2020

New Advertising Center Dedicated in Honor of Beloved Professor and Wife

The formal dedication of the new Drs. E. Lawrence and Adele V. Deckinger Center for Integrated Advertising Communications took place on Tuesday, September 20, signifying St. John's University's continued commitment to offer students state-of-the-art, immersive learning environments.

"My most sincere thanks go to the Deckinger family for their generous support," said Luca Landoli, Ph.D., Interim Dean and Professor, Division of Computer Science, Mathematics, and Science, The Lesley H. and William L. Collins College of Professional Studies (CCPS), in his opening remarks. "The Deckinger Center functions as a specialized learning environment and is quickly becoming the home for all our advertising programs. It's an incredible asset that increases the competitiveness of our programs and the quality of the learning of our students."

In 2007, the Deckinger family established the Drs. E. Lawrence and Adele V. Deckinger Advertising Research Fund in recognition of the Deckingers' work in and commitment to advertising research. Elliott Lawrence Deckinger, Ph.D. '96HON taught at the University from 1982 until 2007. He passed away in 2008 and was predeceased by his wife in 2002.

"My parents loved St. John's and St. John's loved them back," said their daughter, Nancy Deckinger. "One of the ways that they showed their love for St. John's was in



"Teaching at St. John's was a wondrous, rewarding journey."
—Dr. E. Lawrence Deckinger



donating money for what ultimately has become this center. My hope is that it culminates in something substantial to further St. John's students' learning in all aspects of the field of advertising and prepares them for fulfilling careers."

This specialized learning space within CCPS is modeled after a typical advertising agency, giving students a preview of careers in the field and invaluable experiential learning opportunities. It features a touch-down computer center (i.e., a series of smaller workstations shared by multiple users) with state-of-the-art Mac stations, Cintiq drawing monitors, format printers, writeable walls, and multiple video display screens.

According to the US Department of Labor, advertising, promotion, and marketing managers are expected to experience 10 percent job growth from 2021 to 2031, double the average expected during the same period in other fields.

"The Deckinger Center reflects St. John's commitment to enhancing the teaching and learning environments for faculty and students," explained Kevin T. James '11C, '13MBA, Assistant Dean and Director of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, CCPS. "It will be a creative common space where students connected to the world of advertising can convene and nurture their ideas."



"The heartbeat of St. John's is its people. Ask any professor, any donor, and any staff member—they will say it's always been about the kids."

—Matthew Deckinger

Dr. Deckinger's career in advertising dates back to 1937 when he began working in the mailroom of Biow Company. He joined Grey Advertising in 1956, holding several positions there before retiring in 1982 as General Manager and Executive Vice President.

That same year, he decided to share his years of experience with the next generation of advertising professionals by joining St. John's University as a Professor of Marketing. A beloved professor and mentor to scores of would-be advertising professionals, he was instrumental in bringing the National Student Advertising Competition to the University.

Recalling Chevrolet's "The Heartbeat of America" advertising campaign that was part of the competition under the guidance of his father one year, Matthew Deckinger explained, "The heartbeat of St. John's is its people. Ask any professor, any donor, and any staff member—they will say it's always been about the kids."

Dr. Deckinger was awarded the President's Medal and was bestowed the title of Distinguished Visiting Professor. In 1996, the University honored both Deckingers with Doctor of Humane Letters degrees.

In his curriculum vitae, Dr. Deckinger described the experience of teaching at St. John's as "a wondrous, rewarding journey." 📖

"My parents loved St. John's and St. John's loved them back."

—Nancy Deckinger



“ *It’s all been a great learning experience—
and the most challenging and rewarding
of my career. It never ceases to excite me.* ”

—Odaris Ithier-Olle



A *Brand*

NEW YEAR:

University Launches Uplifting Brand Campaign



*T*ypically, St. John’s University brand campaigns involve special signage that appears in high-traffic public spaces such as subway and train stations, bus stops, on traditional and digital billboards, and on various forms of public transit. This past spring, two longtime colleagues from the Office of Marketing and Communications collaborated on a unique idea that will benefit St. John’s for years to come.



Last spring, a free-standing statue featuring the University crest was unveiled at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), greeting international travelers and announcing the presence of St. John's to the world. Digital signage with the brand tagline, "St. John's University: Education That Elevates," was prominently displayed nearby.

Elena Damiani, Director of Media Planning in the Office of Marketing and Communications, noted that University President Brian J. Shanley, O.P., wanted to launch a new brand campaign in the Fall of 2022, and was open to new concepts and ideas. Clear Channel Airports, a company specializing in media advertising hosted by airports, approached Ms. Damiani about opportunities for St. John's to advertise in local airports.

I THOUGHT IF WE'RE TARGETING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, PARENTS, ALUMNI, AND EVEN INFLUENCERS, AN AIRPORT CAN POTENTIALLY REACH ALL THOSE GROUPS, WITH THE ADDED BONUS THAT WHILE THE CAMPAIGN IS TECHNICALLY LOCAL, YOU'RE REACHING PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER.

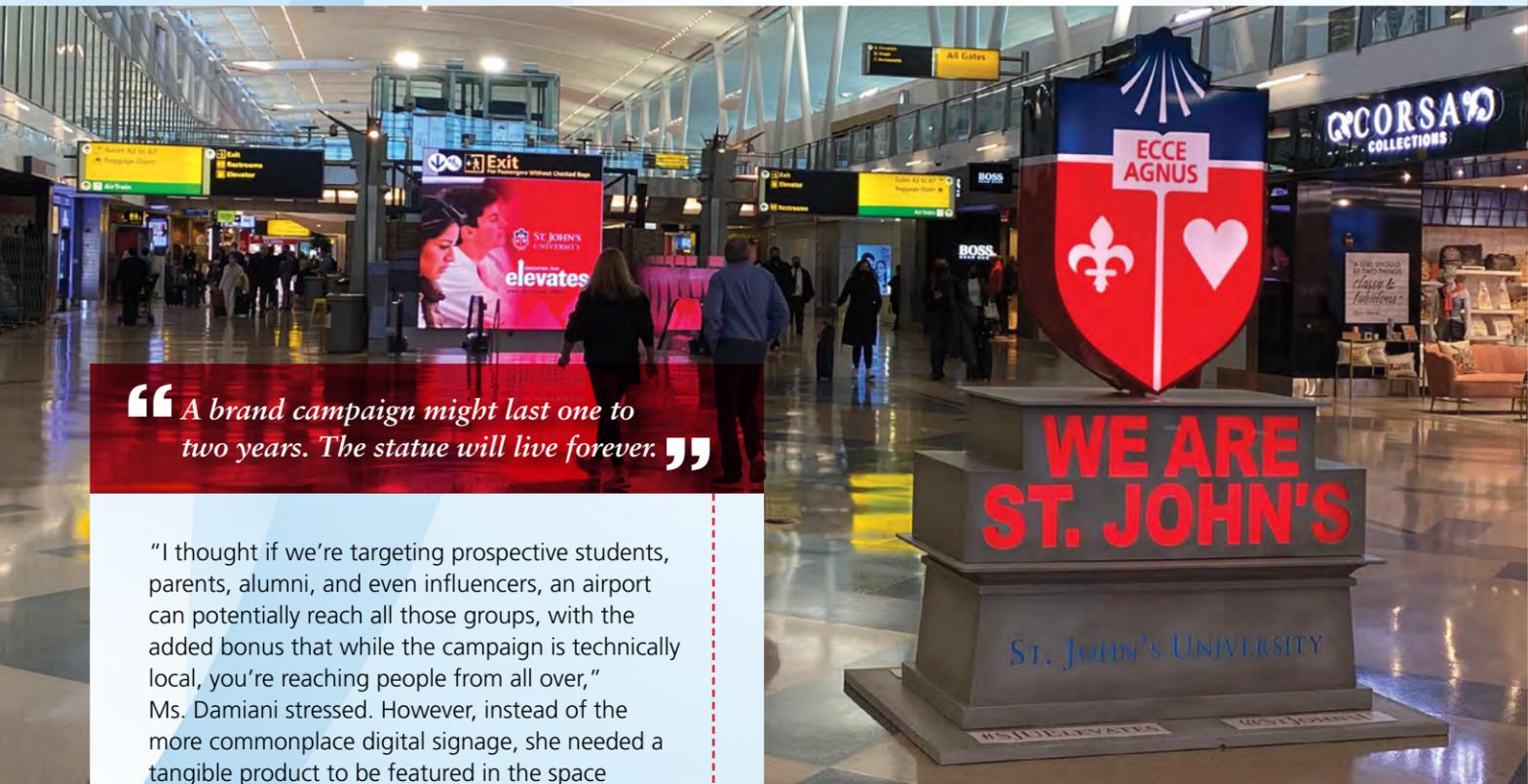
"I truly enjoyed working with the team at St. John's," Mr. LaFary said. "They came to us with a strong vision for what they wanted to create and were there to see it through every step of the way. We had to work through various design changes in order to facilitate budget, timeline, and even a venue change."

"I really wanted it to pop," Ms. Ithier-Olle stressed, so lights were added to illuminate the crest, which stands on a base featuring the longstanding tagline for the University, "We Are St. John's."

Ms. Damiani convinced administrators of the project's viability by stressing its potential to live beyond the campaign. "We made sure it would be weatherproof so it could be featured prominently on campus, and it would be illuminated so you could see it at night."

The statue was placed in the international arrivals area of JFK Airport for 12 weeks, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Ms. Damiani received several positive messages across the University's social media platforms lauding the statue and its placement. "As you're walking through the airport you expect to see an advertisement on the big screen, but you're not expecting to see a huge St. John's crest. It really stands out."

During the statue's exhibition at JFK, the University ran two contests on Instagram. For one, contestants had to compare two images from the St. John's display at JFK airport and spot the differences they found in the comment section. The post was liked nearly 3,000 times and more than 400 people entered the contest. The winner received a \$500 Delta Airlines gift card. The Snap and Share contest asked contestants who visited the airport to take selfies of themselves and the statue. The winner was a St. John's alumna, who also received a \$500 Delta Airlines gift card.



"A brand campaign might last one to two years. The statue will live forever."

"I thought if we're targeting prospective students, parents, alumni, and even influencers, an airport can potentially reach all those groups, with the added bonus that while the campaign is technically local, you're reaching people from all over," Ms. Damiani stressed. However, instead of the more commonplace digital signage, she needed a tangible product to be featured in the space being offered.

Feeling this was a unique opportunity, Ms. Damiani began researching and brainstorming with colleagues on how best to fill that space. She approached Odaris Ithier-Olle, Creative Director for the Office of Marketing and Communications, with the idea of a statue—something iconic that would represent St. John's.

"I had never been asked to do anything like this in the 33 years I've been at St. John's," Ms. Ithier-Olle recalled. "As far as doing design pieces, this was the biggest challenge. I was nervous, but excited." After some research, she prepared several options, and was pleased that the selected design of the freestanding University crest was replicated exactly as she created it with sculptor Matt LaFary of Expo Arts, LLC.

Following its time at JFK, the statue was brought by the Department of Campus Facilities and Services to Carnesecca Plaza on the Queens campus, where it now stands, serving as a beacon of welcome for all who visit, especially prospective students and their families who will come for Open House in the fall and Accepted Student Day in the spring. Ms. Damiani is also investigating other placement options off campus for the holiday season. "It's been a really exciting project," she observed.

"Fr. Shanley knew St. John's was more than it was getting credit for," Ms. Ithier-Olle stressed. "And that's why he wanted us to put our name out there and was willing to fund this unique project."



QUEENSBOROUGH BRIDGE



UBS ARENA



THE HIGHLINE →

Ms. Damiani and Ms. Ithier-Olle agreed that this statue will live long after the brand campaign ends. There is discussion around moving the statue to the Great Lawn at Commencement for students and families to gather for photos. "A brand campaign might last one to two years," Ms. Ithier-Olle noted, "and then you have to start all over with a new concept. The statue will live forever."



St. John's is making its presence felt in Times Square, the Nasdaq building, and Hudson Yards, where over 60 digital banners have been placed both indoors at a mall there and outdoors.

Ms. Ithier-Olle was genuinely excited describing the creative assets that will also appear in Penn Station on its staircases, clocks, and poles. "I've never done this before. We're going to be taking over Penn Station." She plans to give some of the signage "a urban edge," in keeping with the flavor of New York City artwork.

She added, "Because we have so much real estate to work with, I'm creating a unique and innovative design experience. For instance, maybe we place a basketball player going up for a shot on the staircase leading up to Madison Square Garden, where the St. John's Men's Basketball Team often plays."

Ms. Ithier-Olle noted that under the umbrella of "Education That Elevates," she would like to see other language incorporated to keep each design element fresh, while united by the same theme. "Elevate your mind, elevate your heart—short, witty words to demonstrate each brand chapter. We don't want everything to look the same," she said. "Different words and images will reflect the overall brand message."

Her enthusiasm for these projects is palpable. "It's all been a great learning experience—and the most challenging and rewarding of my career. It never ceases to excite me." 📌



The Students Behind the Brand Campaign

LIAM JOYCE '22TCB

Liam Joyce first got word of his image being part of St. John's University marketing efforts from his classmates at The Peter J. Tobin College of Business. He was spending time together with some friends when one mentioned seeing his picture on the University website—and the random sightings soon multiplied.

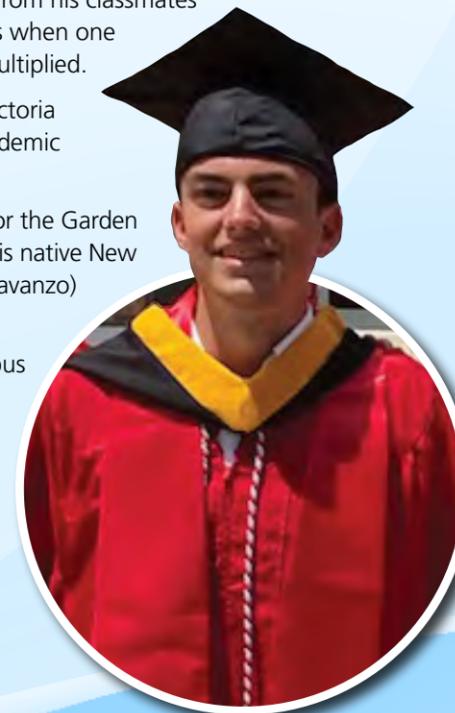
The image of Liam and his classmate Joanna Morocho captured during a class taught by Victoria L. Shoaf, Ph.D., was part of a photoshoot completed before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the University to temporarily transition to remote instruction.

Being part of a national brand campaign for St. John's is a slight but almost destined pivot for the Garden City, NY, native who spent his first year studying at Providence College before returning to his native New York. A second-generation Johnnie, his parents, Edward Joyce III '89CBA and Millie Joyce (Davanzo) '89CBA, were business students who graduated in 1989.

"I knew St. John's; I have family members who are alumni and I was familiar with the campus as I have been going to basketball games there since I was a kid. I already had some good friends from Chaminade High School there who I knew liked it, so it was a smooth transition for me."

During his senior year, he lived in an off-campus residence with some Tobin classmates. They now live in Astoria, NY, and are beginning their professional business careers. Liam, who studied business analytics, is now employed as a Data Operations Analyst for Aon PLC, a British-American multinational financial services firm.

"St. John's University has a great business school and alumni network," he said. "Everyone knows someone who went to St. John's, so that helps."



JOANNA MOROCHO '21TCB

Joanna Morocho was traveling with family in Ecuador when she began receiving messages on her phone. "You are on a billboard!" she was told by a cousin who also attended St. John's.

Puzzled at first, she soon saw the St. John's University "Education That Elevates" image depicted on her cell phone screen. Upon returning to the United States, the East Elmhurst, NY, native stood in awe at the illuminated "Education That Elevates" billboard adjacent to Citi Field.

Joanna attended Monsignor McClancy Memorial High School before enrolling at St. John's University. A 2021 graduate who studied accounting at The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, Joanna is currently enrolled in the Master of Science program in Risk and Financial Advisory.

"As an undergraduate, I was a full-time student who commuted to the Queens, NY, campus," she recalled. "It was, and still is, a valuable experience as it enables me to help at the local restaurant that my family operates in Queens."

Reflecting on what it means to be depicted in the brand campaign for St. John's University, Joanna thoughtfully shares: "I am the child of immigrants, and my brother and I are the first in our family to complete college. I am proud to be part of the message 'Education That Elevates' as it is motivating to me and is a tribute to the sacrifice and commitment of our parents." 📌



This innovative brand campaign has several other unique facets, Ms. Ithier-Olle stressed. Over Labor Day weekend an aerial St. John's University banner with the tagline, "Education That Elevates," flew from Coney Island to the Hamptons. She noted that many people sent her photos. "So, there you have another asset that's very impactful," she said.

Alumni Events

VISIT WWW.STJOHNS.EDU/ALUMNIEVENTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.

WANT TO HAVE YOUR OWN EVENT AT ST. JOHN'S?

Alumni receive a 15% discount on space rentals. Please call the Office of Conference Services at 718-990-7300 for more information.

1870 COURT RED STORM MEN'S BASKETBALL TAILGATE RALLIES

Carnesecca Plaza

January 3: vs. Marquette, 5 p.m.
January 10: vs. Butler, 5 p.m.
February 1: vs. Seton Hall, 7 p.m.
February 18: vs. Creighton, 6 p.m.

Stout, 133 W. 33rd St., New York, NY

January 20: vs. Villanova, 5:30 p.m.
January 29: vs. Georgetown, 12:30 p.m.
February 11: vs. Providence, 10:30 a.m.
February 25: vs. UConn, 10:30 a.m.

1870 COURT RED STORM TAILGATE RALLY ON THE ROAD

February 14
Chicago Chapter: 1870 Court Red Storm Tailgate Rally on the Road (St. John's Men's Basketball at DePaul)
Location TBD, 7 p.m. (Central time)

February 22
DMV (i.e., Washington, DC; Maryland, and Virginia)
Chapter: 1870 Court Red Storm Tailgate Rally on the Road (St. John's at Georgetown)
Location TBD

CHAPTER GAME WATCHES (Check the alumni events website for the Atlanta Chapter games watches!)

January 29
South Florida Game Watch
Washington, DC, Game Watch

February 25
South Florida Game Watch

February 12: Blessing of the Couples, Staten Island
February 18: Blessing of the Couples, Queens
March 1–12: St. John's in Florida
We will host many fun events for our alumni.
March 8: Johnnies BIG EAST Tip-Off, Feile, NYC
March 17: St. Patrick's Day Mass, Brunch, and Parade
New York City, Stout Grand Central

Celebrating the Women of St. John's
Women's History Month
Sunday, March 26, 2023
Garden City Hotel
1–3:30 p.m.



**YOUR CLASSMATES
WOULD LOVE TO
HEAR WHAT'S
NEW WITH YOU!**

Visit
[www.stjohns/
newsandnotes](http://www.stjohns/newsandnotes)
to share memories
and milestone
events.

April 22 through 30: Reunion Week
April 24: Alumni Golf Outing
April 25: Alumni volunteer appreciation dinner
April 29: Greek Life/Fraternity and Sorority
softball game
Alumni Gala at the Inn at New Hyde Park
April 30: Alumni Mass, Brunch, and New York Mets vs.
Atlanta Braves, Citi Field
April 27: GOLD Social
April 28: Latinx Social
President's Society Reunion – Date TBA

**SAVE THE
DATE**

OCTOBER 6–14, 2023 | ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAM—SPAIN

The alumni travel program, now in its fourth year, has proven to be a fun, exciting, and memorable experience. This trip is hosted by the Office of Alumni Relations and Miracolo Tours. To make a deposit or for more information, contact Mark Andrews, Director of Alumni Relations, at andrewsm@stjohns.edu or Miracolo Tours at tours@miracolotours.com.



The Founders Society Induction Ceremony Honors St. John's *Most Generous* Benefactors

A gathering of many of the most generous supporters of St. John's University was held in midtown Manhattan on Wednesday, October 19, when nearly 80 people attended The Founders Society Induction Ceremony and Dinner.

MORE THAN
70
MEMBERS

The Founders Society, St. John's most prestigious donor recognition society, celebrates those individuals and organizations who have made lifetime gifts and pledges to the University totaling at least one million dollars.

The event, which featured remarks by St. John's President Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.; University officials; William J. Janetschek '84CBA, '17HON, Chair of the Board of Trustees; and benefactors, gave powerful witness to the power and promise of a St. John's education.

Fr. Shanley set the tone for the celebratory evening, sharing during the ceremony that whenever he is asked if he enjoys fundraising, he replies in the affirmative. "I get to meet incredibly generous people who have done extraordinary things in their lives," he explained. "They want to give back—and it is that we celebrate and should encourage at St. John's."

"Through their generosity, members of The Founders Society have made a transformative impact on the lives of students and they are so vital to the ongoing success of St. John's," he continued. "Their giving is remarkable and inspirational."

A common theme heard from each inductee was the lasting impact that St. John's University had on their lives and how that serves as motivation for them to give back. James W. Christmas '70CBA, '10HON and Eileen V. Christmas have underwritten the University's annual James and Eileen Christmas Business Plan Competition. Open to all St. John's undergraduate and graduate students, the event encourages them to submit business plans judged by St. John's faculty for monetary awards.

In accepting the honor, Mr. Christmas remarked, "As a student, St. John's gave me a foundation and an education to succeed. For that, I owe the University a debt of gratitude. These days, I truly enjoy seeing and interacting with the innovative and entrepreneurial students we have on campus."

After being recognized, and while standing alongside his wife Corrine, Mr. Kalenka, Corporate Vice President of Investor Communications Solutions Operations for Broadridge Financial Solutions and a Trustee of St. John's, shared: "Corinne and I are honored to be included in this very prestigious group of exceptionally generous and caring

people. We are also both thankful and fortunate to be in a position where we can share some of our financial resources with St. John's. I look back fondly on the education I received at St. John's that propelled me to succeed in business."

As he formally and posthumously inducted John P. Langan into The Founders Society, Christian P. Vaupel, Ed.D., Vice President for Advancement and University Relations, recounted one of his generous demonstrations of lasting love. "In January 2020, the University was contacted by an attorney notifying us that St. John's was the residuary beneficiary under Mr. Langan's estate. When he declared his last will, John made provisions for St. John's to receive funds to establish the Karen M. O'Keefe Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for female undergraduate students who pursue degrees in the areas of finance and accounting. John did this to honor the memory of his late wife, Karen M. O'Keefe, who earned a bachelor's degree from our College of Business Administration (now The Peter J. Tobin College of Business) in 1976."

"After thoughtful reflection, John felt that the best way to honor his love for Karen was through a gift to St. John's," he continued. "This extraordinary bequest came to more than seven million dollars. It is a remarkable and living tribute to the love between the married couple."

Another Trustee, President and Chief Executive Officer of Protiviti Inc., Joseph A. Tarantino '80CBA, and his wife Eileen A. Tarantino '80CBA, were recognized for their passionate support of St. John's students, Catholic education, and serving those most in need. The alumni couple consistently devote their time, talent, and philanthropy in support of scholarships, Red Storm athletics, capital projects, and the University's highest priorities.

Mr. Tarantino described how he regularly returns to campus to interview and hire students. "It is like looking in a mirror," he explained. "Our students today are a reflection of those of us who came before them, and that is why Eileen and I give back to St. John's."

The inspiring evening was made even more memorable due to a bittersweet presentation made for the late Douglas G. Vetter '88C, '91L. His award was accepted by several of Mr. Vetter's siblings—Susan Burnett '01Ed, Cathyanne Martin '85CBA, and Richard Vetter '86SVC—all graduates of St. John's.

Joining IBM right out of St. John's School of Law, for more than 15 years Mr. Vetter quickly rose through the ranks in its legal department. He moved to Apple Inc. in 2007 and ascended to become the company's number-two lawyer. Along the way, he led a team of 125 lawyers who managed legal concerns for all Apple products, services, and marketing and advertising efforts.

“
THEIR GIVING IS
REMARKABLE AND
INSPIRATIONAL.
”
—Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.

Despite his powerful position, he regularly made time to meet, mentor, and support St. John's Law students. He believed strongly in diversifying the legal profession, and he made a leadership gift to help the law school recruit and support Black students. As testament to his impact at Apple, the company recently made a one million dollar gift to support a scholarship in his name at the law school.

Salvatore J. Zizza '67UC, '72MBA, '07HON and Patty Zizza were also recognized at the ceremony. At the age of 10, Mr. Zizza and his

family came to the United States from Italy. The transition to New York was difficult; they had no relatives and his family did not speak English. By 13, he was negotiating family real estate opportunities when not working in a bingo hall or bowling alley or delivering food. He turned down a partial opportunity to play college soccer in Connecticut so he could attend St. John's University in his Brooklyn neighborhood due to the generous scholarship he received.

The Zizzas' commitment is all about supporting the Vincentian mission. They established the Zizza Family Scholarship, Partners for Student Success Fund, and the Zizza Tobin Professorship. Additionally, Mr. Zizza served on the Board of Governors and still serves on the President's Dinner Committee and Real Estate Advisory Committee. For his contributions, the University recognized him with the President's Medal, Spirit of Service Award, the Pietas Medal, and an honorary degree.

The celebratory evening featured heartfelt remarks from Board of Trustees Chair William J. Janetschek '84CBA, '17HON, retired Partner and Chief Financial Officer, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. L.P. "Special people like you care so much about the University and make St. John's the special place that it is today. You enable us to help the next generation of students." 🙏

NEW MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDERS SOCIETY

- James W. Christmas '70CBA, '10HON and Eileen V. Christmas
- Robert F. Kalenka '84CBA, '91MBA and Corrine Kalenka
- John P. Langan (posthumously)
- Joseph A. Tarantino '80CBA and Eileen A. Tarantino '80CBA
- Douglas G. Vetter '88C, '91L (posthumously)
- Salvatore J. Zizza '67UC, '72MBA, '07HON and Patty Zizza

ADVANCEMENT FAST FACTS

Impact of Alumni and Friends,
2021–22 Fiscal Year

www.stjohns.edu/give

Thank You for your generous support.

TOTAL 2021–22 UNDERGRADUATE
INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS:

MORE THAN
\$242M

AVERAGE ANNUAL TOTAL
INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT AWARD:

\$24,625

PERCENTAGE
OF RECIPIENTS:

99%

\$28,562,224

FY22 TOTAL RAISED

CLASS OF 2021
PLACEMENT RATE:

90%

195K+
ALUMNI

**FISCAL YEAR 2022
FOUNDERS SOCIETY**

THOSE WHO HAVE DONATED ONE MILLION DOLLARS OR MORE
TO THE UNIVERSITY DURING THE COURSE OF THEIR LIFETIME.

14
NEW FOUNDERS
SOCIETY MEMBERS

THERE ARE MORE THAN

70
FOUNDERS.

8K+
TOTAL DONORS

549
20+ CONSECUTIVE
YEAR DONORS

782
LEGACY DONORS



MEET THE DEANS



ANNE Y. F. LIN '84P, '86PHARM.D., FNAP, DEAN AND PROFESSOR
College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

Dr. Lin began her tenure as Dean of the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (CPHS) in September after serving as Founding Dean and Professor of Clinical and Administrative Sciences, School of Pharmacy, Notre Dame of Maryland University. Prior to joining Notre Dame of Maryland University, she served as Dean for the College of Pharmacy, Glendale Campus, at Midwestern University, and as founding Chair of the Department of Pharmacy Practice at the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy, Wilkes University.

A double alumna of St. John's University, Dr. Lin earned her B.S. in Pharmacy and her Doctor of Pharmacy from the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions. She served in multiple roles at the College, including Assistant Professor of Clinical Pharmacy; Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy; and Director of the Doctor of Pharmacy program. She also served as Director, Drug Information Services, at Long Island Jewish Medical Center.

Dr. Lin has received numerous awards and honors for her leadership and academic accomplishments. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and a Board of Trustees member at Maryland University of Integrative Health.

What attracted you to St. John's University?

The University mission and its commitment to educating the children of immigrants is what resonates with me. Having earned two degrees at St. John's, I know firsthand how education can transform not only the lives of the students who study here, but also the lives of their families, as well.

What led you to your chosen field?

I attended The Bronx High School of Science and had a great interest in biology and chemistry and was interested in combining science with health care.

How have your previous positions prepared you for your current role?

I believe all your work and life experiences prepare us for the roles that we have. As a faculty member at St. John's, and later, as a department chair, dean, and founding dean, I gained a broader perspective on what leadership means and what is needed for success. My involvement in national professional organizations and on nonprofit boards also gave me perspectives beyond my own discipline that I believe are important to what I do now.

What long- and short-term goals do you have as Dean?

CPHS has a great opportunity for our students to be engaged in interprofessional education, that is, the opportunity for students to learn from and about each other, so that they are prepared for interprofessional practice in health care. Effective teamwork is critical to our ability to provide quality care that can ensure positive clinical outcomes in patients. The addition of the new St. Vincent Health Sciences Center will provide a space for this to take place, as well.

What is the biggest challenge of your position?

Health care is constantly changing, and we need to be ahead of the changes so we can lead and not just follow. We need to be constantly evaluating what we do and how we do it, and continuously revise our curriculum for the future. We need to take actions that will create the change that we want to see in health-care delivery, education, and research.

What is the most gratifying part of being Dean?

The most gratifying part of being a Dean is the opportunity to work with talented and committed individuals who want to achieve excellence, and to do work that will help our students achieve excellence and reach their full potential. Nothing makes me happier than to see students succeed.

What five words would you choose to describe your College?

Committed to students. Diverse. Excellence.

How do you decompress/relax in your free time?

I like music (classical and jazz), reading, and going to the theater. I also make greeting cards.

What is the best piece of advice you can give a student?

Take chances to learn about new things, even if you are uncomfortable. Do not do what is easiest—success takes hard work. Find mentors who will be honest with you and help you to grow.



LUCA IANDOLI, PH.D., INTERIM DEAN AND PROFESSOR
The Lesley H. and William L. Collins College of Professional Studies

Dr. Iandoli began his tenure as Interim Dean in September, after serving as Associate Dean for Global and Online Programs in the Collins College of Professional Studies (CCPS). He is also Professor in the Division of Computer Science, Mathematics, and Science. Prior to joining St. John's, he served as an Associate Professor at the University of Naples Federico II (Italy), and as Visiting Research Professor at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ. He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Center for Collective Intelligence of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

His research focuses on online collective intelligence, interface aesthetics, and design-driven entrepreneurship, and he is a member of the editorial boards of several academic journals. Dr. Iandoli is the founder and director of the St. John's University Design Factory, an interdisciplinary product design and learning center that supports students' creativity and entrepreneurship.

What attracted you to St. John's University?

As the case in life, sometimes good things happen by chance and connections. I was teaching as a visiting professor at Stevens Institute of Technology, when I decided to apply for the position of Associate Dean for Global and Online Programs at St. John's. As I became acquainted with St. John's academic community and mission, I developed a strong sense of attachment to the values of the University. I think St. John's University is a fantastic place to work and study.

What led you to your chosen field?

It was primarily my interest in global programs and internationalization. In my previous role, I had accumulated significant experience in international research collaboration, starting with my Fulbright scholarship at the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence. I also launched several international programs and study abroad initiatives at the University of Naples Federico II and Stevens Institute of Technology. Finally, thanks to serving in leadership roles in international academic associations, I built a very large and dense global network of colleagues around the globe. That became a great asset when I joined St. John's.

What long- and short-term goals do you have as Interim Dean?

CCPS is an innovative and dynamic College and I will keep it on its trajectory of growth and innovation. Right now, we are working on the launch of new programs and expanding the Design Factory, which is a creative and maker space that

adds to the already outstanding lab infrastructure available for CCPS students. I am leveraging the design perspective to innovate our pedagogy and favor the adoption of high-impact practices to increase student engagement and retention. Finally, I am working with faculty to promote research via interdisciplinary collaboration.

How do you decompress/relax in your free time?

I always remember Dave Copeland's advice in his book *Generation X*, which was a very influential novel for my generation. He wrote maxims such as, "remember you have a body" and "the sun is not your enemy." Following this advice, I try to compensate for the intellectual work that my job requires with activities that help me to get in touch with the world or express myself in different ways. I love cycling, hiking, and traveling (even better when all three are combined). I love making art and playing music, which for me involve photography, museum-going, and playing guitar.

What is an important lesson you have learned from a student?

There are so many, but one is very recent and enlightening. I have decided to involve some of our students in the project team that is working on the expansion of our Design Factory lab. One of them told me how excited he was to know that someone in the administration had asked for his opinion and active involvement. I plan to have more student involvement—not just by listening to them, but by having them in charge of something.

What is the best piece of advice you can give a student?

Never stop wondering and being curious about the world. Wonder and curiosity are the beginning of learning—and they are fun. This also translates into a test for their career. Ask yourself what you learned in the last three months of work. If the answer is "nothing" or "not so much," maybe it is time to look for a new job. 🧐

Family Weekend



“

This event generates so much family unity, and there are so many fun activities.

—Maritza Nieves

”

On Saturday, following a brunch hosted by the Division of Student Affairs in Montgoris Dining Hall, participants interested in Study Abroad were invited to attend a presentation, “The Journey Continues Abroad: Understanding our Global Mission,” which was held in the D’Angelo Center. Faculty members delivered academic presentations in classrooms located throughout the D’Angelo Center classrooms.

The festivities then moved to the Great Lawn, where guests gathered for the Family Weekend Carnival, a staple of the event that offered carnival games, rides such as a mechanical bull, slides, and a huge collection of free pumpkins.

“There is an indescribable energy that is felt when our families are on campus, and the carnival gives us an opportunity to make connections that will last for years to come,” said Samuel Baah, Associate Director of Orientation and New Student Experience.

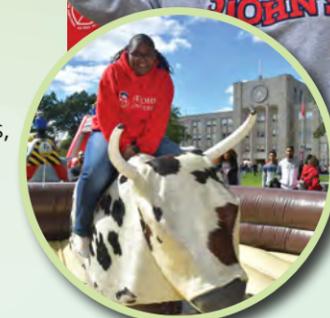
Parent Marit Brox flew from Norway to experience Family Weekend and visit her son, Elias, a first-year student who received a scholarship to be a member of the Men’s Soccer team. It was her first time on campus.

“This is something else!” Ms. Brox exclaimed, as she strolled along the verdant Great Lawn. “In Norway, we have big universities, but not like this, where students can live on campus and have access to all of these beautiful grounds. This is like what I have seen in movies about college life.”

Senior Amanda Rivera, a psychology major, and her mother, Maritza Nieves, have never missed a Family Weekend during her years as a St. John’s student. “This is our tradition, and we love to do it,” said Amanda, after posing for a picture taken by her mom while standing in the midst of the sun-splashed carnival.

“This event generates so much family unity, and there are so many fun activities,” said Ms. Nieves, of Woodhaven, NY. “Plus, we get to see the construction,” she added, while gesturing toward the building site for the striking, new, 70,000-square-foot St. Vincent Health Sciences Center.

Marcelino Serrano of Rochester, NY, was delighted to visit the campus that is now home for his daughter, Nadia, a sophomore. “Everything is wonderful here, and she really loves it,” he said as he relaxed at a picnic table just off the Great Lawn.



Students and Loved Ones Reunite at Family Weekend

The excitement was palpable on St. John’s University’s Queens, NY, campus as students welcomed their families and friends for three days of fun activities, great music, carnival rides, and food during Family Weekend, held from Friday, October 7, through Sunday, October 9.

“We are thrilled to welcome families from across the region and around the country to reunite with their student during Family Weekend,” said Kathryn T. Hutchinson, Ph.D., Vice President for the Division of Student Affairs. “Staying connected to support systems is important to student success. Family Weekend is the perfect opportunity for students to introduce their families to friends, faculty, administrators, and coaches who are part of their St. John’s family and an important part of their collegiate journey at St. John’s.”

The annual event kicked off Friday evening as the St. John’s Women’s Volleyball faced off against Marquette University in Carnesecca Arena. Many of the first arrivals to Family Weekend later took in the Chapell Players Theater Group’s first performance of *Catch Me if You Can* in The Little Theatre. More performances of the Broadway musical (Great Lawn, pictured left) were staged to the delight of attendees throughout the weekend.



At a nearby table, Francine and John Alexander shared snacks with their daughter, Taylor, as they took in the carnival during their first visit to St. John’s. “I love the atmosphere that is all over the school and the people, who are very sweet,” said Taylor as she sat between her parents.

“Having Taylor here at this University gives me peace of mind,” Mr. Alexander said. “We live on Staten Island. She is away at college, but she’s not that far away. It’s safe, and if she needs us, we can be here quickly for her.”

Taylor’s twin brother, Justin, is also finding happiness as a student on St. John’s campus on Staten Island. “When they’re happy, we’re happy,” said Francine Alexander with a laugh.

Late in the afternoon, the University hosted its popular Residence Village Block Party, which featured music and food stations. The weekend ended Sunday with a Community Mass held in St. Thomas More Church. Participants also enjoyed a brunch, the chance to win raffle prizes, and the final performance of *Catch Me if You Can*.

Highlights of Family Weekend on St. John’s Staten Island, NY, campus included a Rock the Red Breakfast for students and staff on October 7, followed by Screen on Green, a movie on the Great Lawn with snacks, courtesy of Student Government, Inc., according to David N. Gachigo, M.P.A., Interim Vice Provost, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Division of Student Affairs, on the Staten Island campus. On October 8, students and their loved ones gathered for Family Day to enjoy food, snacks, music, a photo booth, and a caricature artist.



HOMECOMING FEST



ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING *We Are... St. John's!* HIGHLIGHTS



ALUMNI CONVOCATION



3-ON-3 FUNDRAISER



HALL OF FAME

BRISCELLA FREDERICK-LOOMIS
WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

St. John's Welcomes Nursing Students



The latest cohort of St. John's University nursing students is embarking on a career whose demands are evolving but whose foundational values remain as essential as ever, according to Francine Laterza, Ed.D., R.N., PNP, CNE, Director of Nursing.

As Dr. Laterza continues to build a new nursing curriculum, the students are taking mostly general University-required courses. Nursing courses for the group should begin largely in 2023 and clinical work, exposing students to specialized areas of practice, should begin when they begin their third full year.

Dr. Laterza has more than 18 years of experience as a registered nurse and a pediatric nurse practitioner and another 14 years of experience as a nursing educator. She is a past recipient of the National League for Nursing Foundation's Nurse Educator Award and is a National League for Nursing Certified Nurse Educator.

A resident of Massapequa, NY, Dr. Laterza has worked in a number of New York City-based hospitals. She said she would like to capitalize on the University's historical relationship with the borough of Queens, growing the program in the Vincentian tradition.

"Queens has been so good to St. John's," Dr. Laterza said. "I see the nursing school as an opportunity to give back to the borough. I would like to make this the nursing program of Queens. There are some great institutions in Queens that do not have the nursing personnel to support them."

THE PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE SHAPED THE OUTLOOK OF PEOPLE WHO WERE CONSIDERING NURSING AS A CAREER. NURSES WENT THE EXTRA MILE TO HELP PEOPLE TO HEAL OR TO HAVE A LAST MOMENT WITH THEIR LOVED ONES.

The inaugural cohort has a decidedly metropolitan-area identity. Of the 39 students, 34 are from New York State, including more than 20 from New York City. More than half of the cohort self-identifies as nonwhite, and 84 percent are female.

Consistent with the cultural diversity of Queens, Dr. Laterza says the University will follow a theory of education called transcultural nursing popularized by Madeleine Leininger, Ph.D., a nursing theorist who believes in considering a patient's racial, ethnic, and cultural influences when determining a plan of care. Such an approach can ease feelings of uncertainty and fear in patients. It likewise can allow nurses to broaden their perspectives and offer more holistic care.

According to Dr. Laterza, transcultural nursing is consistent with St. John's core values and an ideal fit for nurses who hail from and seek career opportunities in diverse metropolitan regions. "Nurses should always understand cultural sensitivities," she said. "That is what

will make us different here at St. John's. Our core values allow us to attract a diverse population of students who want to be part of a community that is diverse and welcoming."

Several members of the inaugural cohort shared their stories recently, including why they decided to pursue nursing education and what made them choose St. John's. Though their backgrounds and career ambitions vary, all are proud to be members of this pioneering group.

Nurses should always understand cultural sensitivities. That is what will make us different here at St. John's. Our core values allow us to attract a diverse population of students who want to be part of a community that is diverse and welcoming.

—Francine Laterza, Ed.D., R.N., PNP, CNE



The University's new class of 39 nursing students began studies this fall. Most are expected to graduate by 2026. After passing licensing exams, they will begin work in an industry hardened by the coronavirus pandemic, but still guided by values of service and compassion.

"The pandemic experience shaped the outlook of people who were considering nursing as a career," Dr. Laterza said. "Maybe they had a loved one in the hospital and they had a real one-on-one interaction with their nurses," Dr. Laterza continued. "Nurses went the extra mile to help people to heal or to have a last moment with their loved ones."

In April 2022, the University received approval from the New York State Education Department to offer a Bachelor of Science degree program in Nursing and only then could it begin the student recruitment process for the Fall 2022 semester. A month later, ground was broken on the multimillion-dollar St. Vincent Health Sciences Center that will house the nursing school when it opens in Fall 2024.

Nursing education is not new to St. John's University. In 1937, a Department of Nursing was formed at St. John's within The School of Education. The department became a separate School of Nursing Education in 1942, helping to train nurses during World War II. In 1958, the School again became a department under The School of Education, before being discontinued in 1966.



ESTHER BABALOLA is using the lessons she learned in track and field to propel her to success as part of the newest cohort of St. John's University nursing students.

Discipline, character, leadership, and attention to detail are all essential to a gifted sprinter and jumper, Esther said. But they are also fundamental to success as a student.

The daughter of a doctor who happens to also be a conference champion long jumper, Esther needed no coercion to enroll at St. John's. It's close to her Nassau County home, carries a sterling reputation, and offers her an opportunity to one day become a nurse practitioner or even attend medical school.

"Seeing the way my mom takes care of my whole family, she is the best person ever," Esther said. "What I didn't know until seeing it was how much people respect her. Now that I might be pursuing a job in the medical field, she says I can always turn to her."

Esther said her first few months in St. John's nursing program have been demanding, but they have also been effective preparation for her career ambitions. Anesthesiology, as a doctor or nurse practitioner, is an area of interest.

EMMA DERGARABEDIAN is uncertain what changed the direction of her life, but she is delighted to be on a path now toward earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing at St. John's University.

Unaware the degree program was available at St. John's, Emma intended to enroll elsewhere. But once she discovered the University's nursing program while doing some random research, the 18-year-old from Baldwin, NY, was all in.

"I didn't know about the program," Emma, a first-year student, said. "But when I discovered it, I realized then that I really liked this school. I wanted to stay close to home for college, so St. John's worked out perfectly."

Emma, a graduate of Long Island Lutheran High School in Brookville, NY, has been interested in health-care services for several years. She serves as a caretaker for her grandmother, who has thyroid cancer, and was an athletic trainer intern at her high school. A decorated athlete who excelled in lacrosse, soccer, and cheerleading in high school, she imagines a career one day as an orthopedic or emergency room nurse.



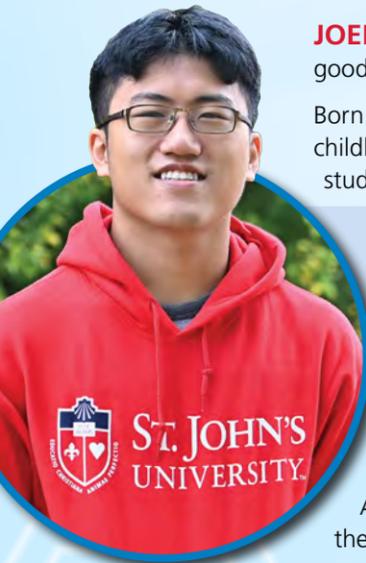
JOEL KIM was fortunate to survive a complicated birth. Eighteen years later, he is determined to pay his good fortune forward in a career that helps others.

Born with digestive complications that required life-saving surgery as a newborn, Joel has known from childhood that he wanted to become a nurse. Now a part of the class of St. John's University nursing students, he is closer than ever to his destiny.

"I've always known that I want to help other people," Joel said, "I also want to be like my parents, who also help others. I would not be here today if it wasn't for the care I received from the people who worked in the hospital and in the health-care industry."

The son of two nurses, Joel survived emergency gastrointestinal surgery to take pressure off a stressed digestive system. His mother, who works at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital in Flushing, NY, and his father, a public school nurse, were later told that two such procedures were performed at that time; the other baby did not survive.

As Joel matured, there was no question about a career choice. "I watched my parents and how hard they worked to help others. I knew I wanted to do that, too," he said.



JORDAN SCHMIDT'S life took a turn when her mother, Andrea Schmidt, died of cancer two months before her graduation in June from Massapequa High School in Massapequa, NY. Reflecting back on that time, Jordan believes Andrea provided gentle, loving, motherly guidance from above as she made the decision to pivot to St. John's and join its cohort of nursing students.

"I didn't know this until a few months after she passed, but my mom hoped I would go to St. John's," Jordan, 18, said while seated in the D'Angelo Center during a break in her classes. "She didn't tell me because she didn't want to influence me. She knew having my sister here would be a great resource, and if I ever had to, I could easily travel home."

Jordan abandoned plans to attend Penn State University, eventually enter medical school, and become a physician, opting instead for a future in nursing. Her ambitions include becoming a nurse practitioner, perhaps in a trauma setting, after a few years of general practice.

"When my mom was in hospice care I saw how compassionate the nurses were," Jordan recalled. "I watched the nurses take care of her and I wanted to pay that forward. I saw nursing school at St. John's as sort of a sign."



The Catholic Scholars Program Celebrates 10 Years

What was once the ambitious and innovative idea of a faith-filled and prescient laywoman—whose unexpected death on Christmas Eve in 2013 left a gaping wound still felt at St. John's University—is now an established and award-winning program producing young Catholic leaders in service around the globe.

For the last decade, a signature St. John's University undergraduate student leadership experience successfully moves Catholic Scholars through a four-year developmental program that translates faith into action. The goal is to create a community of committed students who are called to be leaders in and of service to the Roman Catholic Church.

"It all started with Pam Shea-Byrnes," recalls Rev. Michael J. Carroll, C.M., Board of Trustee Emeriti, who at the time was Provincial Superior, Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission, and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at St. John's.

← Pamela "Pam" Shea-Byrnes, D.Min. '86SVC, '90G served as Vice President for University Ministry and University Events. Her leadership and 40-year relationship with St. John's was both inspired and inspirational. Pam worked to create programs and activities that provided others, particularly students, with the opportunity to gain and exercise the Catholic and Vincentian values that long permeated her own life.

"In her encounters with students on campus, Pam saw students of deep Catholic faith and she created the Catholic Scholars Program as an opportunity to express that faith, to enhance that faith experience at St. John's, and to send better-prepared Catholic students into the world to serve others," shared Fr. Carroll. "Pam was a true Vincentian and, in many ways, a visionary. What a wonderful and lasting gift she left behind for St. John's."



A member of the inaugural class of Catholic Scholars, Marissa Ruotolo-Merkle '16C is a Campus Minister at St. Francis Preparatory High School who credits the program with charting the direction of her post-college life. →

"It all began at one of the first Campus Ministry events I went to at St. John's. Pam Shea-Byrnes was presenting, and she asked us one important question: 'What are you going to do with this one great life?'"

"Though I only knew Pam for a short year and a half, I carried her question with me through every moment of my time at St. John's. I witnessed her carry out her life and ministry with grace and joy. As I journeyed through Catholic Scholars and became more and more invested in what Campus Ministry and the University as a whole offered, I strived to exemplify that divine love the way Pam did and her challenge to make the most of my one great life."



“ IT'S THE → COMMUNITY THAT IS FORGED AMONG THE CATHOLIC SCHOLARS, THE MENTORING THEY RECEIVE, AND THE ATTENTION TO THEIR OWN GROWTH THAT MAKES IT SPECIAL, THAT LEADS TO DEEPER FAITH, AS WELL AS TO PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS.

—Fr. Aidan R. Rooney, C.M., M.Div., M.Th. '78NDC



Students apply for membership in their senior year of high school, and if accepted into the program and the University, they commit themselves to faith-based leadership training, service, and prayer to form a deeper understanding of what it means to be a leader inspired by the Catholic tradition. They join a community of committed students, who together with faculty and campus ministers, engage in monthly workshops, course work, and prayer experiences that deepen their integration of faith and reason.

In 2018, the Catholic Scholars Program was nationally recognized by the Catholic Campus Ministry Association with the Exemplary Award for Ministry in Discipleship.

The collaborative, faith-based, academic program is open to students with any major. It relies on the commitment of several faculty members, campus ministers, and local faith leaders who serve as group spiritual directors and workshop presenters.

“I have had the pleasure of leading some of the seminars and formation programs for the Catholic Scholars at their monthly gatherings outside of class over the years,” said Christopher P. Vogt, Ph.D., Academic Coordinator and Associate Professor, Department of Theology and Religious Studies. “We have had some really good conversations about ethics and how to live faithfully in the world. I think that sense of community and connection with each other is a key factor in making deep learning possible.”

Catholic Scholars receive a \$5,000 annual scholarship for four years of undergraduate studies. Students are required to meet all program expectations and maintain a 3.0 grade point average and good standing with the University. Students are accepted into the program only after demonstrating Catholic leadership and academic excellence in their home parishes and school communities.

With a 94 percent retention rate (2021 academic year) and a 93 percent graduation rate (2022 academic year), the Catholic Scholars are high-achieving students spread out across five out of the six Schools and Colleges that comprise St. John's. Catholic Scholars perform hundreds of service hours annually and the experience is transformative.

“We have many high-performing students at St. John's, but it's the community that is forged among the Catholic Scholars, the mentoring they receive, and the attention to their own growth that makes it special, that leads to deeper faith, as well as to personal and professional success,” observed Rev. Aidan R. Rooney, C.M., M.Div., M.Th. '78NDC, Executive Vice President for Mission.

The Catholic Scholars Program has produced many success stories and a variety of Catholic leaders and professionals who better embody and demonstrate their commitment to the Catholic faith. Catholic Scholar alumni have assumed a variety of professional roles, including, but not limited to, Catholic school teachers, campus ministers, a clinical and counseling psychologist, a development associate, diocesan director of youth and young adult ministry, director of religious education, lawyer, an ordained Catholic priest, physician assistants, and pharmacists, among other professionals. All Catholic Scholars grow in their faith journey and help others to do the same.

← Catherine D'Angelo, MSW, LSW '19Ed was a member of the fourth cohort of Catholic Scholars. She now serves as a Development Associate at Interfaith Philadelphia, a nonprofit that works to promote social harmony and inter-religious understanding, equips individuals and communities for interfaith engagement, builds collaborative relationships, and stands in solidarity within a diverse neighborhood.

“I went to a small Catholic high school and the thought of going to a large university was very intimidating,” she reflects. “Knowing that I would be surrounded by a group of peers who had shared values of faith and justice is what attracted me to the Catholic Scholars Program.”

“As a Catholic Scholar, I learned more about what it meant to be a person of faith as a young adult,” she continued. “My faith was no longer this thing that my parents told me to do, but it was something I wanted to explore and learn more about and develop my personal relationship to God and my faith.”



Once a member of the third cohort of Catholic Scholars, Rose Haslbauer is now a teacher in the religion department of Archbishop Molloy High School.



↓ *“My faith journey as a Catholic Scholar was much like many young women and men of faith—not perfect, and with some doubts along the way,” she recalls. “However, the Catholic Scholars Program was able to be a support through even the most difficult times, reminding and teaching me to move forward with faith, which in turn, helped foster an even stronger spirituality in the end.”*

“I have used many of my Catholic Scholar experiences in my career as a religion teacher. I have taken many of the lessons I learned from the program and incorporated them on a simpler scale to relate to my students,” she continued. “I want the St. John's community to know that the Catholic Scholars Program is more than just a scholarship program. It is a community of faith within a larger community of believers. Catholic Scholars can help young people transform their own lives and faith while touching the lives of the community around them as well.”

In 2013, Jeanne Carroll '70Ed, '80MBA and her husband Paul Carroll '69CBA, '71MBA, '79APC, '17HON, Chair of the Board of Governors, created the Pam G. Shea-Byrnes, D.Min. '86SVC, '90G Catholic Scholars Scholarship Fund, which provides additional scholarship opportunities. The endowment fund, which surpassed one million dollars in 2018, provides several students each year with an opportunity to be a leader in the program.

Paul was a student-athlete who attended the University on an athletic scholarship and received an assistantship to attend the College of Business Administration (now The Peter J. Tobin College of Business) for his graduate degree. His wife of more than 50 years, Jeanne, worked in the campus bookstore while she attended St. John's.

The couple treasure the personal letters of gratitude they receive from Catholic Scholars who describe the personal impact the program has in their own lives and the lives of people they encounter in their service opportunities.

“We are continually amazed by these gifted students in this program and how they share their faith, love of life, and the spirit of service with others, as well as their ability to work together as a team. They have become a very close faith-based community,” shared the Carrolls.



“We hope that other alumni are encouraged to help support the Catholic Scholar Program. These student scholars are truly living the Catholic and Vincentian mission of faith put into the works of service.”

112 CURRENT CATHOLIC SCHOLARS



RAY LONGO

'80CBA: Trainer, Mentor, and Champion

Tucked behind the single door of a nondescript brick building alongside the Long Island Rail Road tracks in Garden City, NY, mixed martial arts (MMA) champions are being made.

Unknown to the casual passerby, the simple, two-story building could be mistaken for any other industrial, suburban workspace. But once inside, make no mistake: the solid, even drab, brick exterior fails to presage the more colorful and impactful experience that lies within.

It is here that accountant turned Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) trainer Ray Longo '80CBA of Longo-Weidman MMA runs the premiere mixed martial arts academy in New York, offering world-class instruction and training for all skill levels from beginner to advanced.

Ray is widely considered one of the best coaches in the world, earning multiple Coach of the Year nominations from the *Fighters Only* magazine's World MMA Awards. He has trained three champions, all with local roots, and has been part of some of the most memorable moments in UFC history.



In 2007, in one of the greatest upsets in UFC history, his fighter Matt Serra of East Meadow, NY, knocked out Georges St-Pierre at the mixed martial arts event UFC 69. In 2013, another fighter he trained named Chris Weidman of Baldwin, NY, knocked out Anderson Silva to win middleweight gold. Last year, an up-and-coming fighter named Aljamain Sterling from Uniondale, NY, won the bantamweight title.

—“

There was no roadmap for success, other than working your ass off.

—”



RAY IS AT HEART A TEACHER—AND A MENTOR WHO NEVER FORGETS HIS ROOTS. WHILE HELPING OTHERS TO CLIMB THE PROFESSIONAL HEIGHTS OF THE MMA WORLD, RAY, THE CONSUMMATE CORNER MAN, IS AS GROUNDED AS THEY COME.

Ray oozes a New York persona from every pore of his stocky, six-foot frame. With a distinctive Long Island accent and a stunningly creative use of swear words, he very much looks the part of the Hollywood tough guy who has spent a lifetime studying the contact sport that allows a wide range of fighting techniques including striking, kicking, and grappling. He also has some acting film credits and experience as a stuntperson.

But on this dreary, damp weeknight, to watch Ray work at training an eclectic mix of aspiring champions and ordinary neighborhood fitness buffs is to watch a master class in human relations. With smoldering dark eyes and a quiet intensity, he surveys a busy gym while simultaneously serving as a psychologist, a strategist, and a devoted sage to fighters two generations his junior. At one point, he even bends down to tie the shoe of a gloved fighter.



Ray is at heart a teacher—and a mentor who never forgets his roots. While helping others to climb the professional heights of the MMA world, Ray, the consummate corner man, is as grounded as they come.

Born in Astoria, Queens, he moved to Long Island as a child and played the usual mix of youth sports, but was always fascinated by martial arts. As a young teenager, he watched Bruce Lee movies in the cavernous Calderone Theater in Hempstead, NY. On the silver screen, Ray was interested in Jeet Kune Do, a hybrid martial arts philosophy drawing from different combat disciplines that is often credited with paving the way for modern mixed martial arts.

He soon began to travel around Long Island and the metropolitan area looking for places to train, spar—and always learn. In the pre-internet era, there was an emerging underground network of martial arts training and rogue schools that often provided classes for free.

“You were essentially a punching bag,” he jokingly recalled. “Why pay to get the sh** kicked out of you?”

“It was a different time,” Ray recounts, when information was shared by word of mouth and via monthly martial arts magazines. “Guys would soap up their storefront windows because they didn’t want you to see what was going on inside.”

Now 64, Ray, the married father of two daughters, can—with personal experience and colorful anecdotes—trace the birth, growth, and global reach of MMA.



Ray training Matt Serra

After graduating from Herricks High School, Ray’s parents encouraged him to pursue his education and he followed his brother Paul, then a senior enrolled at St. John’s.

Ray’s passion for martial arts was further cultivated at St. John’s in the late 1970s. As a first-year student during the Student Activities Fair, he signed up for the Karate Club. At the time, the club was led by Sihak Henry Cho, a Korean taekwondo pioneer and instructor who is recognized as one of the first people to introduce Asian martial arts into the United States. →



SIHAK HENRY CHO

For years, Mr. Cho served as the Head Coach for the St. John’s University Tae Kwon Do Club and assisted other University clubs. He was the creator and promoter of the All-American Open Tae Kwon Do/ Karate/Kung Fu Championship Tournament held at Madison Square Garden for years, which was attended by notable martial artists like Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris.



When not sparring on campus and traveling around the metropolitan area in search of innovative martial arts seminars, Ray studied accounting and graduated in 1980. He did accounting work for seven years while living at home and used some stock options to help finance his early foray into the growing world of martial arts.

“Remember, there was no UFC. This was a time when martial arts was not a means to make money—it was an organically emerging force of nature.”

An accountant by day, Ray trained friends in kickboxing and various disciplines by night out of his garage. His training techniques were “old school,” and included pushing cars down desolate streets. He soon began promoting fights.

“There was no roadmap for success, other than working your ass off.”

Today, his training methods reflect his personality and his ability to develop and draw out of his fighters an inner strength and skills they may not know that they possess.

Nicholas “Nick” Vendikos ’91SVC, Senior Director of Athletic Development, first met Ray when he showed up on a prospective alumni donor list. A random cold call burgeoned into a friendship, and Mr. Vendikos has been training in his gym for three years. →

“Yes, Ray is a character, but the true measure of his character is what he does when the cameras aren’t rolling,” shared Mr. Vendikos. “He guides people with varying athletic skills, and he does so in a steady and direct way. He personally connects with people on whole different levels.”

Ray puts it this way: “I train people with a pedigree of discipline and people who want to put in the work.”

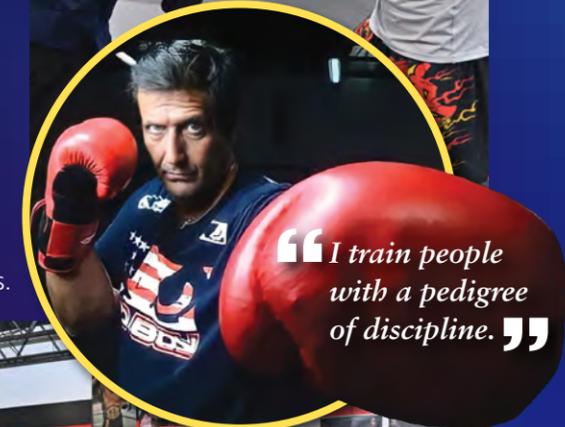
To that end, he has addressed the St. John’s Men’s Basketball team and provided some training sessions to the players. With a keen sense of integrity, a detailed oriented approach to his craft, and an ability to thrive behind the scenes, he still possesses some of the everyday qualities of the trained accountant that he once was.

His career advice for current students is simple: “I found something I would do for free and then figured out a way to get paid for it.”

Ray pivots from standard business norms in that he rejects formal business contracts and prefers to operate with a throwback approach that relies on looking someone in the eye, personal trust, handshakes, and keeping your word.

Upon reflection on the four decades removed from graduation, Ray reminisces, “St. John’s was a lot of fun. I made friends, and I learned some things about people and myself. All of it was good training for what followed.” 🗝

“ST. JOHN’S WAS A LOT OF FUN. I MADE FRIENDS, AND I LEARNED SOME THINGS ABOUT PEOPLE AND MYSELF. ALL OF IT WAS GOOD TRAINING FOR WHAT FOLLOWED.”



“I train people with a pedigree of discipline.”



ST. JOHN'S ATHLETICS INDUCTS 2022 HALL OF FAME CLASS




HALL OF FAME

PRISCILLA FREDERICK-LOOMIS
WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

Priscilla Frederick-Loomis finished her St. John's career as one of the most dominant athletes in the history of the women's track and field program. Under the direction of fellow St. John's Hall of Famer Jim Hurt, Frederick-Loomis set a program record in the high jump that still stands to this day. Frederick-Loomis captured an individual BIG EAST title and qualified for the indoor and outdoor NCAA Championships in multiple seasons. For her outstanding efforts, Frederick-Loomis was named an All-American several times over.

Beyond her excellence as a jumper, Frederick-Loomis has found athletic success on the international stage, placing 28th in the high jump at the 2016 Olympic Games competing for Jamaica and Barbados. She also won multiple medals at the Pan American Games and participated in the Commonwealth Games and World Championships.

In 2019, Frederick-Loomis captured a silver medal in the high jump at the 2019 Pan-American Games in Lima, Peru. Frederick-Loomis cleared the 1.27 meter bar on her second attempt to secure a spot on the podium. Frederick-Loomis added another silver medal at the 2015 Pan-American Games in the high jump. The 2012 St. John's graduate cleared the 1.91 meter bar to earn another top-three finish and remains the only Johnnie to earn a medal in international competition.

Beyond her program record in the high jump, Frederick-Loomis owns top-10 times in the outdoor long jump, indoor pentathlon and indoor 60 meter hurdles. The Sicksville, N.J., native boasts multiple ECAC individual titles in the high jump.



HALL OF FAME

ED BLANKMEYER
BASEBALL

The winningest coach in the history of both St. John's University and the BIG EAST Conference, Ed Blankmeyer guided the Red Storm baseball team from 1996 until 2019. In those 24 seasons, Blankmeyer captured the highest of honors earned under his leadership and fellow St. John's Hall of Famer, Bob Carter and Jim Rouse.

A 2018 inductee into the American Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame, Blankmeyer went 679-900-4 at the helm of the Red Storm, good enough for a career winning percentage of .423. The Johnnies tallied a winning record in 23 of his 24 seasons leading the program.

Blankmeyer's teams won the BIG EAST Tournament titles and six BIG EAST Regular Season Championships. He guided the Johnnies to the NCAA Tournament 11 times and saw his record reach the 40-win plateau on one notable occasion. In 2012, Blankmeyer's Red Storm became the first team to program history to advance to the Super Regional round of the NCAA Tournament after winning three straight at the Chapel Hill Regional, including two over the host Tar Heels.

An eight-time BIG EAST Coach of the Year, Blankmeyer owns 347 career victories in league play, far and away the highest total in conference history between 2005 and 2019. Blankmeyer was the league's coach of the year four more times in just 14 opportunities.

Blankmeyer has also represented the Stars and Stripes on the international stage, managing the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team in the summer of 2015 after serving as an assistant coach in 2010.

Under Blankmeyer's tutelage, 124 different Johnnies earned All-BIG EAST honors and 91 more signed with MLB organizations through either the draft or free agency. 18 of Blankmeyer's former players have gone on to play in the Big League.

Prior to arriving at St. John's, Blankmeyer spent more than a decade as an assistant coach at his alma mater, Seton Hall. Under the mentorship of his former coach, Mike Thompson Sr., with the Pirates, Blankmeyer coached a number of household names including Hall of Famer Craig Biggio and 1995 AL MVP Mike Vaughn.

A Long Island native, Blankmeyer graduated from Seton Hall after making two College World Series appearances with the Pirates in 1974 and 1975. A .329 career hitter and an Academic All-American, during his time in South Orange, Blankmeyer was selected in the 21st round of the 1976 MLB Draft by the Baltimore Orioles.



HALL OF FAME

JAYSON WILLIAMS
MEN'S BASKETBALL

Before embarking on the road to NBA stardom, Jayson Williams first made his mark in Queens. In three seasons under the tutelage of fellow Hall of Famer Lou Carnuccio, Williams amassed 1,672 points and 490 rebounds in just 72 collegiate appearances. He converted on 58.2 percent of his field goal tries during that span, a mark that currently ranks seventh on the program's career record list.

Williams' best season came as a sophomore in 1989-90, when he averaged career-high marks of 19.5 points and 7.9 rebounds and led St. John's to its fifth National Invitation Tournament (NIT) Championship. He earned the tournament's Most Valuable Player honors after posting 28 points and 18 rebounds in the title game against Saint Louis. Williams also garnered Second Team All-BIG EAST honors that season.

As a junior, Williams averaged 14.6 points and 7.8 rebounds per game before seeing his season cut short due to injury. Despite seeing limited action, Williams was selected 21st overall in the 1990 NBA Draft by the New Jersey Nets, an organization with which he would spend a majority of his decade-long NBA career.

A 1998 NBA All-Star, Williams registered 3,472 points, 3,164 rebounds and 501 blocks over the course of his career. He led the association in offensive rebounding in 1996.



HALL OF FAME

KIERAN McARDLE
MEN'S LACROSSE

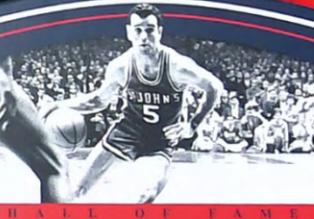
Kieran McArdle, the most decorated player in St. John's Men's Lacrosse history, starred at the University from 2010-14. A two-time All-American, McArdle remains the Red Storm's record book during his time in Queens and still stands as the program's career leader in points (264), goals (125) and assists (139).

After recording 27 points as a freshman, McArdle burst onto the national scene during his sophomore campaign in 2012. The Rockawayton, N.Y., native averaged four points per game, the highest total average of any lacrosse player in Division I. McArdle led the Red Storm to the 2012 BIG EAST Championship game after downing No. 2 Notre Dame, No. 7 in the semifinals. McArdle finished with seven points in the win over the Irish, followed by 16-point sophomore season. McArdle became the first Red Storm player since 1986 to earn USILA All-America Honorable Mention recognition.

As a junior in 2013, McArdle set the program's current single-season record for points with 85 after registering 36 goals and 49 assists. In a March 23 win over Robert Morris, McArdle set the school's single-game mark with 13 points. The tally also came with a first in the nation, averaging 7.7 assists per game during a nine-win season for the Red Storm, including a victory over top-ranked Harrisburg in South Jersey. McArdle was named the 2013 BIG EAST Attack Player of the Year and received USILA Second Team All-America honors.

McArdle logged another 80-point season during his final campaign in Queens while setting a program record with 66 goals. McArdle garnered USA Second Team All-America status for the second straight season and currently stands as the only player in BIG EAST history to repeat as Attack Player of the Year.

The fifth overall selection in the 2014 Major League Lacrosse (MLL) draft, McArdle was named the MLL Rookie of the Year and earned MLL All-Star honors three times in a four-year span from 2015-18. He captured his first professional title with the Premier Lacrosse League's Washington in 2022.



HALL OF FAME

JERRY HOUSTON
MEN'S BASKETBALL

One of the great point guards in St. John's Basketball history and the last captain of the Joe Lopich Era, Jerry Houston was a three-time weekly honoree from 1982-83. Over his last final two seasons, Houston helped lead St. John's to a 35-19 record.

As a senior, Houston averaged 15.3 points in 28 games, shooting 44.7 percent from the field and 74.2 percent from the free-throw line. His contributions, however, went well beyond statistics. As Houston played an important role in the team's most successful years in the sport, he was the Holiday Festival's MVP and the team's captain. Houston led the four-time team to the BIG EAST Championship game at Madison Square Garden, where he primarily made both free and foul shots. In the championship, he scored 14 points in the win over the Irish. In the semifinals, Houston scored the game-winning shot over the minutes to go before Houston helped a miraculous comeback, scoring the final three points of a 75-74 overtime victory.

Later that season, Houston played a key role in leading St. John's to an unprecedented fourth NET title during the school's first campaign. In the quarterfinal against Georgetown, Houston set the school's single-game mark with 19 points and 10 rebounds in a comeback win. After scoring 18 points against Army in the final game, Houston sealed the Red Storm's victory over top-seeded Virginia with a pair of last-second free throws, making his mark to sustain, "what a way to go!"

A First Team All-Metropolitan selection in 1985, Houston was one of 50 players named to the St. John's 25th Century Team in 2008.

A Manhattan native, Houston starred at Lodielle Academy, where he led the CIFMA, single-game record of 68 points, a mark that stood until 1988. Houston also held a non-basketball record with the Minnesota Lynx the following year.

After his playing career, Houston spent time as a head coach in the high school ranks and an assistant coach at Fordham University.



HALL OF FAME

NADIRAH MCKENITH
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The first WNBA draft pick in program history, Nadirah McKenith starred for the St. John's Women's Basketball Team from 2009-2013.

McKenith led Red Storm to four NCAA Tournament appearances in as many chances during her career, highlighted by the program's first-ever Sweet 16 appearance in 2012. With McKenith on the squad, the Johnnies turned in a four-year record of 87-41, good for a winning percentage of .685.

A three-time general, McKenith currently holds the St. John's career record with 605 assists. The point guard led the team to seven times and dished out 162 helpers during her senior campaign, good enough for 10th on the single-season record list. She also ranks third in program history for career assists with 127 and 17th in career rebounds with 631.

Also a prolific scorer, the Newark, N.J., native ranks 13th on the program's all-time scoring list with 1,213 points and is third all-time with 387 made free throws.

The two-time All-BIG EAST honoree was a WNBA All-Region selection in each of her final two seasons with the Red Storm. As a senior, McKenith was recognized as the Metropolitan Writers Association's highest honor, as she was named the 2013 All-Net Player of the Year.

Following her time with the Johnnies, McKenith was selected 17th overall by the Washington Mystics in the 2013 WNBA Draft. She played 21 games with the Mystics in 2013 before joining the Minnesota Lynx the following year.

The St. John's Athletics Department inducted its 2022 Hall of Fame class during a momentous ceremony held during Homecoming Weekend inside historic Carnesecca Arena at the Queens, NY, campus. The Hall of Fame's 23rd induction class honored six individuals for their contributions to

St. John's Athletics spanning six decades. The evening was a jubilant celebration of former student-athletes and coaches who achieved excellence in their sport while representing St. John's on the national and international levels.

This year's cohort includes baseball coaching legend Ed Blankmeyer, Olympian Priscilla Frederick from Women's Track and Field, Men's Basketball standout Jerry Houston, Men's Lacrosse All-American Kieran McArdle, two-time All-BIG EAST selection Nadirah McKenith of Women's Basketball, as well as Men's Basketball star and National Basketball Association veteran Jayson Williams.

The evening began with an invocation from Campus Minister for Athletics Rev. Richard Rock, C.M., and remarks from Athletic Director Mike Cragg.

← *"This is a special night," said Mr. Cragg. "This is truly one of my favorite events of the year, not just to welcome in the newest class to the Hall of Fame, but to be back together on campus at St. John's University. I have a passion for St. John's as much as you do. That's the bond we all share."*

All six inductees were then introduced by a chosen presenter before taking to the podium themselves to deliver poignant remarks about how St. John's shaped them beyond the fields of play. Their experiences spanned generations and represented differing sports, but each honoree came back to how their time representing St. John's changed their lives for the better.



ED BLANKMEYER

The winningest coach in the history of both St. John's University and the BIG EAST Conference, Ed Blankmeyer took over a program with a reputation of success and continued that tradition over two and a half decades. In 24 seasons at the helm of the Red Storm

baseball program, he won at a .623 clip, compiling a cumulative record of 829-500-4. A total of 347 of those wins came during conference play, allowing him to claim BIG EAST Coach of the Year honors eight times. In his final 15 seasons leading the Red Storm, Mr. Blankmeyer was named the league's top skipper on seven separate occasions.

He led the Johnnies to five BIG EAST Tournament titles and six regular season conference crowns. No program in BIG EAST history, let alone a single coach, has won more than five. His teams won 40 games or more on nine separate occasions and earned 11 berths in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Tournament. In 2012, he guided the first St. John's team to make a Super Regional after winning three straight games, including two against North Carolina, during the Chapel Hill Regional.



PRISCILLA FREDERICK

Priscilla Frederick finished her St. John's career as one of the most dominant athletes in the history of the Women's Track and Field program. Under the direction of fellow St. John's Hall of Fame member Jim Hurt, Ms. Frederick set multiple program records in the high jump and 60-meter hurdles that still stand to this day. She captured an individual BIG EAST title and qualified for the indoor and outdoor NCAA Championships in multiple seasons. For her outstanding efforts, Ms. Frederick was named an All-American several times over.

Beyond her excellence as a Johnnie, she has found athletic success on the international stage, winning multiple medals at the Pan American Games, and participating in the Commonwealth Games and World Championships. At the 2016 Olympic Games, Ms. Frederick placed 28th in the high jump competing for Antigua and Barbuda.



JERRY HOUSTON

Jerry Houston, the last captain of the Joe Lapchick era at St. John's, was a three-year varsity letterwinner from 1962 to 1965. Over his final two seasons, Mr. Houston helped lead St. John's to a 35-19 record.

Mr. Houston appeared in 70 games at St. John's and averaged 8.7 points and 2.3 rebounds per contest. He registered a 43.6 career field goal percentage and shot 74.2 percent from the free-throw line in his three varsity seasons.

In 1962-63, Mr. Houston averaged 8.3 points in 16 appearances while shooting a personal best 77.2 percent from the line. The following year, he continued his steady play when he averaged 8.2 points, shooting 45 percent in 25 appearances, and helped St. John's to a 14-11 record. As a senior in 1964-65, Mr. Houston averaged a career-best 9.5 points, converting 44.3 percent of his field goal attempts to go with 2.6 rebounds per contest in 29 games.



KIERAN MCARDLE

The most decorated player in St. John's Men's Lacrosse history, Kieran McArdle starred at the University from 2010 to 2014. A two-time All-American, Mr. McArdle rewrote the Red Storm record book during his time in Queens.

He still stands as the program's career leader in points (264), goals (125), and assists (139).

After recording 39 points as a first-year student, Mr. McArdle burst onto the national scene during his sophomore campaign in 2012. The Ronkonkoma, NY, native averaged four points per game, which was the highest among all undergraduates in Division I. He helped lead the Red Storm to the 2012 BIG EAST Championship game after downing No. 2 Notre Dame, 8-7, in the semifinals. Mr. McArdle finished with seven points in the win over the Irish. Following his 60-point sophomore season, he became the first Red Storm player since 1986 to earn United States Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association All-America Honorable Mention recognition.



NADIRAH MCKENITH

Nadirah McKenith starred at St. John's from 2009 to 2013 and was instrumental in leading the Red Storm to the NCAA Tournament during each of her four years in Queens. An All-BIG EAST First Team selection and the All-Met Player of the Year as a senior, Ms. McKenith

helped St. John's make program history with its first-ever trip to the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 the year prior.

A native of Newark, NJ, Ms. McKenith owns the program's career assist record with 605. She led the team in assists during each of her four seasons in Queens, including a personal-best 165 during the 2012-13 season.



JAYSON WILLIAMS

Jayson Williams was a standout performer at St. John's, playing three seasons under Hall of Fame coach Lou Carnesecca '50C, '60GE, '00HON. An All-BIG EAST honoree, Mr. Williams helped lead St. John's to a 61-35

record and a pair of NCAA Tournament appearances during his career. Over his three seasons in Queens, he recorded 1,072 points and 490 rebounds in 72 appearances. His career field goal mark of 55 percent ranks seventh on the program's all-time chart.

The 21st overall pick in the 1990 National Basketball Association (NBA) draft, he played a decade in the NBA and spent much of his professional career with the New Jersey Nets. Mr. Williams recorded 3,472 points, 3,584 rebounds, and 301 blocks during his NBA career. In 1998, he was named to the NBA All-Star Team and finished the season as the league's leader in offensive rebounds.



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